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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONCEPTS OF FEMININITY, 1890 - 1930:
REFLECTIONS OF CULTURAL ATTITUDES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

by

© TONI ANN LAIDLAW

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Concepts of femininity, 1890 - 1930: Reflections of cultural attitudes in psychological theories" submitted by Toni Ann Laidlaw in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores concepts of femininity from 1890 to 1930 in order to determine the extent to which psychological theories were influenced by existing cultural attitudes. Selected works of playwrights and feminists are used as the social indicators considered in conjunction with the psychological theories.

Chapter II examines the historical roots of the concept of femininity from early Hebrew and Hellenistic traditions up to the 19th century. Chapter III deals with works by the playwrights, Arthur Wing Pinero, George Bernard Shaw and Somerset Maugham. Feminist writings are discussed in Chapter IV and works by John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, Suzanne La Follette and Virginia Woolf are amongst those included. The psychologists whose theories are presented in Chapter V include Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud and Karen Horney.Chapter VI discusses the prevelant patterns which emerge. Despite the impact of the feminist movement, femininity continued to be defined primarily in terms of woman's biological function which served to reinforce her value within the context of the nuclear family structure. The definition of the feminine remained a patriarchal definition with the playwrights reflecting it, the feminists succumbing to it and the psychologists reinforcing it by providing it with scientific credibility.

The findings of the thesis support the contention that the knowledge of the social sciences cannot exist in isolation from its culture. Implications of this with respect to both femininity and other concepts which fall within the domain of the human disciplines are discussed.

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Finally, I wish to dedicate the thesis to my mother. I am deeply sorry that she was unable to see its completion, but the knowledge that it mattered a great deal to her has been a continual source of encouragement for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	Introduction	1
	Rationale for a Non-Empirical Methodology	4
	Organization	10
II	Historical Roots	11
	Early Hebrew and Hellenistic Traditions	12
	Early Christian Traditions	18
	The Middle Ages	27
	The Renaissance and the Reformation	38
	The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century	52
	The Nineteenth Century	63
III	The Playwrights	71
	Arthur Wing Pinero	73
	George Bernard Shaw	86
	William Somerset Maugham	99
	Summary	109

Chapter Page

IV The Feminists 113
John Stuart Mill 113
Harriet Taylor Mill 118
Post-World War One Feminism 122
Margaret Sanger 125
Suzanne La Follette 128
Virginia Woolf 133
Summary 138

V The Psychologists 143
Henry Havelock Ellis 143
Sigmund Freud 153
Karen Horney 164
Summary 171

VI Conclusion 175

Bibliography 187

CHAPTER I

Introduction

What is meant by femininity is a question which has received wide attention throughout the course of Western history. Library shelves are filled with treatises, tracts, novels, and verse, all attempting to answer the elusive question which has fascinated men through the ages. Today these treatises have been replaced by theories, hypotheses and experimental data arising from the social sciences. The term femininity has been replaced by the more narrow concept of female roles. But the answer to the question continues to remain elusive. As Klein (1971) points out:

> About its intrinsic nature we are no wiser than before. Our ignorance may have reached a higher level of sophistication but it is still there in full strength
>
> (p. xviii)

The purpose of this inquiry is to explore concepts of femininity from the 1890's to the 1930's, a time when the question of women's rights was a major focus of attention. The intention is to determine the extent to which existing cultural attitudes influenced the formulation of psychological theories of the feminine at that time. In order to do so, two questions are asked:

a. What was each psychologist's concept of femininity?

b. To what extent were these theories related to, or reflective of, other social indicators of the same concept?

There are essentially three reasons for asking these questions. The first can be stated simply as a matter of academic interest. It is interesting to consider the degree to which a relationship exists between one aspect of psychological theory and cultural attitudes in general. The second is in relation to methodology and concerns a growing awareness in the social sciences that "there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured" (Mannheim, 1936, p. 2). There is a tendency on the part of theorist and critic to be unaware of the culturally-determined biases which underly the positions of both. The intent of this study is to bring these assumptions as much as possible to the fore. Finally, psychological theories of women have become the focus of strong criticism on the grounds that they perpetuate feminine stereotypes which, in fact, are no more than the dominant, (that is, masculine), cultural consensus of the time. According to this line of criticism, psychologists have been instrumental in maintaining the status quo vis a vis women, by providing authoritative approval to culturally determined definitions of femininity in the guise of scientific fact. It is hoped that by incorporating other social indicators in addition to the psychological theories, this study will be able to determine, to some extent, the justification of this

criticism.

Two social indicators of femininity are considered in conjunction with the psychological theories. They are: a) selected writings of feminists, and, b) selected works of playwrights. Feminists, by definition, are overtly and consciously concerned with the concept of femininity. Their approach to the question of what constitutes the feminine is both explicit and exclusive. This group does not represent the dominant cultural consensus and, in fact, exists in order that it be changed. The works of playwrights are not overtly or consciously concerned with the definition of femininity (with one notable exception which will be discussed at a later stage). In contrast with the feminists, their approach to the question of what constitutes the feminine is both implicit and inclusive in their works. Further, since all the playwrights considered in this study are male, they are more likely to reflect the dominant cultural consensus of their time.

The works of playwrights have been selected for this study for two reasons:

1. Drama provides a personal and social context within which the concept of femininity can be studied.
2. In order to communicate with his audience, the playwright invests his characters with traits that are identifiable to the public at large. This provides the writer and the audience with a mutual basis of experience. Once this

commonality of experience is established, the author is then free, through the experiences of his characters, to take the audience wherever he chooses in order to convey his point. Since the playwright is attempting to make his characters identifiable in some basic sense with his public, he will create in his male and female leads, characteristics which he believes are present in the men and women who will attend his play. Thus the playwright is often reflecting the existing sexual stereotypes within his society through his central characters.

Rationale for a Non-Empirical Methodology

Twentieth century psychology, in its attempt to align itself with the natural sciences, chose as its means of identification a scientific methodology which demands objectivity as a fundamental requisite. Many psychologists have assumed that "applicability of these methods to social and human events is not only an established fact but that no knowledge is worth taking seriously unless it is based on inquiries saturated with the iconology of science" (Koch, 1969, p. 64). Thus the primary emphasis has been on methodology, i.e. the objectivity of the observation, and on the notion that theoretical understandings are responsible to and decided by observation. Recently this approach to knowledge has been seriously challenged in both the natural and the social sciences, most notably by Bronowski

(1958), Hanson (1969), Koch (1964, 1969), Kuhn (1962), and Polanyi (1957, 1964, 1968).

This critical reaction against the prevailing conception of science as strictly objective arose as a result of the recognition that the persistent emphasis on methodology severely restricted the creative ability of the scientist to conceive advances in theoretical understandings and problem selection:

> ...one of the things a scientific community acquires with a paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that, while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be assumed to have solutions. To a great extent these are the only problems that the community will admit as scientific or encourage its members to undertake. Other problems, including many that had previously been standard, are rejected as metaphysical, as the concern of another discipline, or sometimes as just too problematic to be worth the time. A paradigm can, for that matter, even insulate the community from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the puzzle form because they cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies (Kuhn, 1961, p. 37).

According to Koch (1969), psychology has addressed itself only "glancingly, if at all" to those contexts of human function which are considered most important by the culture at large. He noted that the "stipulation that psychology be adequate to science outweighed the commitment that it be adequate to man" (Koch, 1969, p. 64).

It is necessary to recognize that this critical reaction is levelled against the prevailing conception of "science as strictly objective" and not at science itself (Bronowski, 1958;

Hanson, 1969; Polanyi, 1957, 1964):

> I am not rebelling against the preponderant influence of science on modern thought. No I support it. But I am convinced that the abuses of the scientific method must be checked, both in the interest of science itself, which is menaced by self-destruction, unless it can be attuned to the whole range of human thought (Polanyi, 1957, p. 480).

Polanyi, in fact, rejects the ideal of a strict or complete objectivity for science in particular, and for knowledge in general. According to him, into every act of knowing, scientific or otherwise, "there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known" (Polanyi, 1964, p. xiv) and further that this is a vital component of knowledge and not a flaw in the knowing act.

In science, every paradigm includes a variety of methodological commitments: the designs, procedures, and tools of inquiry. Objectivity in methodology is a fundamental commitment for psychologists in what Kuhn refers to as "normal science" or that aspect of science which is concerned with determining the extent to which the predictions of theoretical positions match with observable data. However, this aspect of science is essentially what Kuhn labels "mop-up" work and is not concerned with calling forth new sorts of phenomena or new theoretical frameworks. Instead it is directed at the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm under investigation already supplies. This serves to make the investigators resistant to, or intolerant of, new perspectives.

Facts that do not fit the prevailing paradigm are often "attributed to the works of incompetents, dismissed as uninteresting and unimportant or even hidden in the files of the researcher who discovers them" (Segal and Lachman, 1972, p. 47).

In the area of psychology from the time of Watson until the 1960's, the prevailing paradigm has been what is known variously as behavior theory, learning theory, neobehaviorism or S-R psychology (Koch, 1961; Segal and Lachman, 1972). This paradigm, in particular, has persistently emphasized a strict scientific methodology at the expense of discovery, leaving psychology with limited resources from which to draw new insights pertinent to a broader theoretical or conceptual framework.

Artists, since they are not bound by scientific methods and strict scientific rigor, have the freedom to creatively interpret and express to the public at large, their impressions of the existing psychological and social climate within a particular society. The relationship between the arts and society has long been widely acknowledged and established. There are those who argue that the most complete and accurate evidence of man's social and moral development can be found within the history of the arts (Clark, 1969; Mukerjee, 1954). Be that as it may, the important point is that aesthetic activity is not a segregated mode of behavior but rather an integral phase of total human behavior built upon human

experience. It is a synthesis or organized whole reflecting the artist in relation to society. In other words, art is essentially a revealing interpretation of certain aspects of human life and the contemporary social environment (Creedy, 1970; Jenkins, 1958; Mukerjee, 1954; Wilson, 1964). Consequently, every work of art has some potential to reveal attitudes and values of a particular cultural or social milieu.

Seldom, however, has the behavioral scientist turned to the arts as a valid source from which to draw information and new insights pertinent to his own field. The credo of science generally excludes the subjective and, therefore, it seems to exclude art. Yet, behavioral scientists have much to gain from a comprehensive study of the arts.

It has been stated that the artist sees a unification between the inner world of man and the outer world of experience, whereas the scientist tends to see more its division. Whereas artists tend to respond to the whole, the scientist, as a result of the dictates of his methodology, has a penchant for piecemeal analysis (Mueller, 1967):

> ...The artist, by embodying the experience of illusion, provides the essential basis for realizing, making real, for feeling as well as for knowing... the external world... art creates nature including human nature... the artist... refuses to deny his inner reality, but also and because of this, is potentially capable of seeing more of the external reality than the scientist (Mueller, 1967, p. 53).

In other words, the artistic attitude is potentially able to see more of external reality than the scientific because it not only uncovers more of one's experiential reality than does science, but it also helps to create more of it in the act itself. Thus the study of art can aid the behavioral scientist by "helping him generate a different approach to his truths, [and] by enriching the creative well-springs from which he draws his insights" (Mueller, 1967, p. 307).

Secondly, the artist often is a sensitive perceiver who can see what is "going on" in society earlier than can others (Nin, 1968). "There is no avant-garde [artist]. The artist is always of his time but some people are a little late." (Edgar Varese in Nin, 1968, p. 190). Consequently, the behavioral scientist can look to the arts for indications of changes or shifts in attitudes of a society that may not be readily apparent in a purely scientific investigation.

Thirdly, and closely tied with the latter, art can provide the behavioral scientist with a rich source of information about the existing beliefs, concepts, values, and norms held by members of a society. Thus, art can serve a social function in two conceptual ways: a) as a means of reinforcing existing social conditions by reflecting them and thereby confirming their legitimacy; and b) as an instrument for changing social conditions by exposing strains and stresses or by transmitting new attitudes (Kavolis, 1968).

Organization

Chapter II will examine the historical roots and traditions from which the concepts of femininity have been derived. Included will be brief considerations of: a) Early Hebrew traditions; b) Hellenistic traditions; c) Early Christian traditions; d) Medieval attitudes; e) Renaissance and Reformation attitudes; f) Restoration and Eighteenth Century attitudes; and g) Victorian attitudes. Chapter III will examine the selected works of playwrights from 1890 to 1930, Chapter IV, the selected works of feminists and Chapter V, the selected works of psychologists who dealt specifically with concepts of the feminine. The selections are intended to be outstanding or representative rather than all inclusive. The ordering is designed to furnish the reader with the cultural context first so that the psychological theories can be examined from that perspective. At the end of each chapter, a summary will be provided in order to highlight prevalent patterns which emerge with respect to femininity. The final chapter will include a discussion of the findings and their implications.

CHAPTER II

Historical Roots

Before dealing with psychological theories of femininity, it is important to consider some of the traditions from which these theories have emerged. An examination of traditions provides insight into the foundation of contemporary thought in relation to women and reflects shifts in attitudes through the centuries.

Two important factors become apparent in such an examination. As the values and conditions of an age change or modify, so too does the belief in what constitutes the feminine. For example, the prevailing concept of women in England could change in two hundred years from that of a morally weak, sexual temptress whose primary aim was the seduction and downfall of men, to one of a being so pure and fragile that piano legs were covered in order not to offend her 'natural' modesty and 'delicate' sensibilities. What does appear to remain constant throughout this time is the notion of female inferiority, regardless of the definition of femininity.

A further important factor which emerges is that the legal and social position of women do not necessarily reflect their actual powers and influence. For example, women in 5th

century Athens were legal non-entities, excluded from political and intellectual life and yet were a prominent focus of the tragedy, sculpture, and painting of the time. This paradox regarding the role of women occurs over and over again in history, demonstrating that the prescribed status of women and their actual status may be separate matters.

Early Hebrew and Hellenistic Traditions

A brief consideration of the laws of the Old Testament provides a source of reconstructing some of the ideals and practices of early Hebrew society. According to Bird (1974), Israel's laws differed most notably from other known legal codes of ancient Mesopotamia and Syria in their "unusual severity in the field of sexual transgression in the severity of their religious laws..." (pp. 48-49). Both these features had significant consequences for women.

The majority of laws addressed the community through its male members. In ancient Israel the family and not the individual was seen as the basic unit of society with the male or 'father' at its head (Bird, 1974). It is to these heads of families that most laws are addressed. The underlying assumption is a society in which full membership is limited to males who are responsible not only for their own conduct but for that of their dependents as well. Only rarely were laws concerned with the rights of dependents but rather, focused on external threats

to the man's authority, honour, and property.

Included in the domain of "property" was a woman's sexuality (Bird, 1974). This was her primary contribution to the family through child bearing. It belonged exclusively to her husband and was carefully guarded as such. Adultery involving a married woman was punishable by death for both offenders since it was a violation of the husband's property rights and an attack on his authority as pater familias (Lev. 20:10, Exod. 20:14). Extramarital sex for a man appears to have been tolerated in certain circumstances provided that a husband's rights were not involved (e.g. prostitution). Virginity was expected of prospective brides and if it was discovered subsequent to marriage that the wife was not a virgin, she was sentenced to death (Bird, 1974). In this case her crime was considered not only against her husband but against her father as well. The penalty for a man who violated an unmarried girl was marriage without possibility of divorce (Deut. 22:28-29).

Divorce was recognized in ancient Israel as the exlusive prerogative of the male:

> A man takes a wife and possesses her.
> She fails to please him because he finds
> something obnoxious about her, and he writes
> her a bill of divorce, hands it to her, and
> sends her away from his home (Deut. 24:1).

Since the position of a divorced woman in early Hebrew society was precarious, provisions in Talmudic divorce proceedings were

instigated to protect women. For example, a husband was required to prepare a document meeting many detailed criteria which presumably gave him ample opportunity to reconsider his decision (Hauptmann, 1974).

It appears that women frequently assumed responsibility for management of property although paradoxically, in law, the likelihood of owning any was limited. It was possible to inherit land as a widow or in the absence of male heirs. However, a woman with either a husband or a father remained under his authority and could not conclude contracts without his consent (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973).

Since the role of wife and mother was seen as essential to the maintenance of the society, it was in this role that women achieved their status as valuable members of the community. The one law which recognized the female as equal to the male was in the commandment to honour one's parents (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). In effect, this law reflects the attitude that the highest possible value of a woman is in her reproductive function. Certainly this was the area in which she could most assert power and gain respect. (In a sense this is true of all women who become mothers. As Slater [1977] points out, every man has a mother and thus has had the experience of being dominated by a woman. In fact, this may be virtually the only outlet for female dominance in a patriarchal civilization.)

The religious sphere was also male oriented and male

dominated. Men served as priests and were required by law to attend the annual pilgrim feasts. Only males could participate in the initiation rite of membership into the religious community - the rite of circumcision. Religious practices excluded all persons in a state of impurity or uncleanliness from cultic participation, and menstruation and childbirth fell into this category. With regard to childbirth, the length of the state of impurity depended on the sex of the child:

> If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days... But if she bears a female child then she will be unclean two weeks.
>
> (Lev. 12:2, 5)

The frequency of menstruation coupled with the value placed on large families must have seriously affected women's ability to function in the cult.

Thus it becomes clear that women in ancient Israel were valued as wives and mothers and it was in the domestic areas in which they had most power and influence. However, they were accorded the status of dependents in the religious and socio-economic organization of the state. It is important to emphasize that discrimination against women was inherent in the structure and function of the state and did not necessarily represent a plot to subjugate them:

> In a society in which roles and occupations are primarily sexually determined, sexual discrimination is bound to be incorporated in the laws.
>
> (Bird, 1974, p. 56)

However, its effect was to enforce and perpetuate their dependence and create an image of female inferiority.

Hellenistic women throughout the Roman Empire appear to have achieved a far greater degree of legal and social independence than did Jewish women. Under Roman law women could divorce their husbands, inherit property, be partners in legal contracts, and make wills. Public education of upper-class women was encouraged and many women achieved recognition as poets, writers, and historians. Stoic philosophers such as Seneca, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus stressed, in their writings, the equality of women with men, although they expected women to apply their education in traditional family roles:

> Typical is the comment of Musonius who, in advocating the education of women, used the rationale that "Only a woman trained in philosophy is capable of being a good housewife."
>
> (Parvey, 1974, p. 118)

Roman women were never given the right to vote and remained under financial and legal guardianship of a husband or father until the end of the Second Punic War (218-201, B.C.). The rise of a middle class in Rome following the war affected the status of women. Dowry rights were no longer relinquished at marriage to the husband but remained under the control of the father. Although the purpose of this law was to keep family estates intact, its effect was to give women more control of their property and greater independence in the marriage relationship. Socially, it appears that Roman women were given far greater

freedom of movement than their Jewish counterparts. They could appear at certain public events such as theatres, banquets, and games, independently or without a male escort.

In contrast to Judaism, Greco-Roman religions were more open to the participation of women. Specific religions such as the cult of Isis initiated many women, and the vestal virgins of Rome had prominence in Hellenistic cultic life. "The influence of women, however, both in leadership and in numbers, was most noticeable among the gnosticized religions" (Parvey, 1974, p. 121). Gnosticism was not a specific religious sect, but rather derived its insights from many sources and permeated many cults. It was essentially a syncretistic movement which advocated the dual nature of humanity, stressing the spiritual and intellectual life. Gnostic thought was a part of the religious environment which influenced early Christianity and many women in the primitive Church were participants in this movement.

Greco-Roman culture and laws with respect to women contrast markedly with those of their Jewish counterparts by the time of Christ. In fact, a trend toward women's emancipation within the Empire was evident as early as the 2nd century B.C. (Parvey, 1974). Interestingly, this trend was met with considerable scorn and disfavour by the popular writers of the time (as were many future attempts which constituted a movement toward the liberation of women). In any event, Hellenistic women moved toward a more open and favourable definition of their status in society while Jewish

traditions kept women confined and dependent. Within the context of these two divergent attitudes, the primitive Christian Church came into being.

Early Christian Traditions

There are two accounts of the Creation in Genesis. The Elohist version states simply and directly that "...God created man in his own image... male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). This version is largely discounted by St. Paul and the early Church Fathers. The contrasting Yahvistic account is written in narrative form and has Eve made from Adam's rib after all other animals have been created:

> And the Lord said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an helpmate for him... And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs... And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.
>
> (Gen. 2:18-23)

Unlike the Elohist account, this version lends itself to misogynous interpretations and was consistently referred to by Paul and the Fathers. It suggests that woman was created as an afterthought to alleviate man's loneliness and that her essential function is to act as his helpmate. In other words, she is not valued much as an individual in her own right. The story also

implies that since she was created from man rather than directly in the divine image, as in the Elohist account, she is farther removed from grace and consequently more susceptible to vice. Her propensity to folly is made explicit in the continuation of the account. It is Eve who initially succumbs to the serpent's temptation and it is she who convinces her husband to do likewise. As punishment, God has them both experience shame and, ultimately, death. Adam is doomed to struggle and toil against nature for survival, a curse which also affects his wife. But as the original (and presumably more serious) sinner, God decrees further punishment for Eve:

> ...I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
> (Gen. 3:16)

The Yahvist account was probably intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive (Bird, 1974; Prusak, 1974; Tavard, 1977). In other words, it reflected the order of society and the human condition as Israel knew and experienced it. This was not unusual in Old Testament writings. For example, since Israel valued women as wives and mothers, numerous passages reflect the worth of the virtuous women in these roles (the most notable exception to this example is found in the Song of Solomon which extols the value of erotic love without any reference to marriage). Through the writings of St. Paul and the early Church Fathers, however, the Yahvist account became the theological corner stone

for justification of the subjection of women throughout the centuries: "Its influence on the Judaeo-Christian tradition can hardly be over emphasized (Rogers, 1966, p. 7).

St. Paul was the first of the Christian writers to focus on the story and in doing so, to give unprecedented attention to the Fall (Rogers, 1966; Tavard, 1977). (His emphasis on the Fall is, in part, understandable, since without it there is no need for redemption through Christ and thus, no need for his own mission [Rogers, 1966].) In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he states that man is the image and glory of God whereas woman is the glory of the man: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:7-9). (No reference is made to the Elohist account which flatly contradicts this point of view.) Since man is closer to God, woman should not usurp his authority in religious matters nor should she be presumptuous enough to teach. In fact, she should learn to be silent. If she has a desire to learn, she is advised to seek assistance from her husband in the privacy of their home:

> Let your women keep silent in the churches:
> for it is not permitted unto them to speak;
> but they are commanded to be under obedience...
> And if they will learn anything, let them
> ask their husbands at home: for it is a
> shame for a woman to speak in the Church.
> (1 Cor. 14:34-35)

> I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence. For Adam was the first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.
>
> (1 Tim. 2:12-14)

Since woman is lowest in the hierarchy, she is counselled to cover her head in church as a sign of her subjection:

> But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.
>
> (1 Cor. 11:3-5)

It is to Paul's credit that despite these teachings, he acknowledges the spiritual equality of women and men:

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
>
> (Gal. 3:28)

Other areas of significance to women in Paul's writings are related to celibacy and marriage. Two sayings are attributed to Jesus which may imply a preference for the celibate life. The first was in response to his disciples' conclusion that if adultery is the only grounds for divorce, it may be better not to marry at all. He replies that:

> ...All men cannot receive this saying save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs which were eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive

it, let him receive it.

(Matthew 19:11-12)

The other was in reference to the time of his second coming when he states: "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Matthew 24:19). Paul's teachings are more emphatic. He states that: "...It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor. 7:1) and counsels that one should marry only if one is unable to remain chaste:

> I say therefore to the unmarried and widows.
> It is good for them if they abide even as I.
> But if they cannot contain, let them marry:
> for it is better to marry than to burn.
> (1 Cor. 7:8-9)

Thus, although marriage is not sinful, celibacy is clearly considered a morally superior state. Yet in another discourse on marriage a different message is discernable:

> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ
> also loved the Church, and gave himself for
> it... So ought men to love their wives as
> their own bodies. He that loveth his wife
> loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated
> his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth
> it even as the Lord the Church: for we are
> members of his body, of his flesh, of his
> bones. For this cause shall a man leave his
> father and mother, and shall be joined unto
> his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
> (Eph. 5:25, 28-31)

However, in the same discourse he made clear his view of the relationship of the wife to the husband:

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own
> husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband
> is the head of the wife even as Christ is
> the head of the church... Therefore as the
> church is subject unto Christ, so let the
> wives be to their husbands in everything.
> (Eph. 6:22-24)

Paul's writings regarding women are, at best, ambiguous. They have been interpreted by some scholars as misogynistic whereas others such as Parvey (1974) argue that the "...subordinated role of women in the Christian tradition is not so much a problem caused by Paul as it is a problem of how the Christian tradition has since chosen to interpret Paul" (p. 137). Without doubt, however, the early Church's guilt about sex and dread of female seduction as well as its insistence on the subjection of women, had its roots in St. Paul's epistles.

The ambiguities which existed in Paul's writings were hardened into antifeminist doctrines by the Early Church Fathers. Redemption was defined as the rejection of the body and the flight of the soul from material, sensual nature (Ruether, 1974), and, soul-body dualism was equated with male-female dualism. Thus, the definition of femaleness as body, according to St. Augustine, decreed a natural subordination of female to male since "flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature". It also makes woman the particular focus and symbol of the Fall and of sin.

Because of their preoccupation with these issues, coupled with their fear of the seductive powers of women, the Fathers displayed a peculiar obsession with the female form. Virtually all of them dealt with questions of dress, adornment and physical appearance (Ruether, 1974; Tavard, 1977). Tertullian (160-230) not only condemned makeup and adornment, but expected women to

destroy their physical appearance to the point of unattractiveness (Ruether, 1974). In this way he believed they were less likely to be a source of sin for men. In one passage he states:

> And do you now know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down on you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It is you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered that image of God: man! Because of the death you merited, the Son of God had to die. And yet you think of nothing but covering your tunics with ornaments?
>
> (Tertullian, in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 132)

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 220) renounced fashion, makeup and jewelry (some of which he believed to be symbols of adultery) and counselled women to wear a veil. They were not to use material that clung to the shape of their bodies and they should always walk with modesty (Prusak, 1974; Ruether, 1974; Tavard, 1977). As a further precaution they were told to avoid the baths where they might be observed naked (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973; Tavard, 1977). St. John Chrysostom (c. 345 - c. 407), in a discourse on child rearing, advised parents to keep a son away from all women with the possible exception of an old and charmless maid servant; "...from a young woman shield him as from fire" (Chrysostom in Rogers, 1966, p. 17). In a letter addressed to a young man who has left the priesthood, he warns:

> ...if you consider what is stored up inside those beautiful eyes, and that straight nose, and the mouth and the cheeks, you will affirm the well-shaped body to be nothing else than a whited sepulchre; the parts within are full of so much uncleanness. Moreover when you see a rag with any of these things on it, such as phlegm, or spittle, you cannot bear to touch it with even the tips of your fingers, nay you cannot even endure looking at it; and yet are you in a flutter of excitement about the storehouses and depositories of these things?
>
> (Chrysostom in Rogers, 1966, p. 18)

The letter is aptly titled "An Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall".

The concept of virginity as a Christian ideal pervaded the writings of the early Church Fathers, making it axiomatic that marriage was a morally inferior state. By the time of St. Augustine (c. 354-430), it was accepted church dogma that sexual intercourse was justified for procreative purposes only (Rogers, 1966; Ruether, 1974). Pregnancy itself was viewed as a degrading experience. St. Jerome (c. 340-420) considered pregnant women a revolting sight and found it difficult to understand why anyone would want children (Ruether, 1974). When Helvidius, a layman in the early Church, and Jovinian, a Roman monk, argued against the moral superiority of virginity over marriage on the grounds that Mary bore children to Joseph after the birth of Jesus, Jerome was incensed. He condemned the idea as blasphemous and disgusting (Rogers, 1966; Tavard, 1977): "...you have defiled the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit from which you are determined to make a team

of four brethren and a heap of sisters come forth" (Jerome in Rogers, 1966, p. 19). In a further treatise he equated marriage with the Old Testament and asceticism with the New, implying that one was not a full follower of the faith unless one led a celibate life.

All the Church Fathers expressed admiration for virgins or widows who abstained from remarriage. Married or marriageable women were generally viewed with fear, suspicion, or outright contempt. Tertullian argued that the only possible motives for a widow's wish to remarry were lust and the desire to rule another man's household. Augustine defined a good Christian husband as one who would "...love the creature of God whom he desires to be transformed and renewed, but hate in her the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection, sexual intercourse and all that pertains to her as a wife" (Augustine in Ruether, 1974, p. 161). The relationship of the Christian husband to his wife, according to Augustine, was comparable to the mandate to "love our enemies". As Ruether (1974) states, this attitude toward married women in Christianity "...not only did not lift up the position of women beyond what it had been in antiquity but even fell below those legal rights to personal and economic autonomy which the married woman had been winning in late Antique society... Christianity actually lowered the position of woman compared to more enlightened legislation in later Roman society as far as the married woman was concerned..." (p. 165).

A composite picture of the ideal Christian woman became one who not only remained virginal and chaste, but distorted or neglected her appearance, and recoiled at the notion that some man might desire her. Because the feminine was equated with body, sensuality and depraved characteristics of mind, her salvation required "not... an affirmation of her nature but a negation of her nature, both physically and mentally and a transformation into a possibility beyond her natural capacities" (Ruether, 1974, p. 161). Whereas the pious man must rise above his body, the pious woman must rise above her very nature denying and destroying all that naturally pertains to her as a woman. Anything relating to sexuality, to real physical women, was feared and despised. These were the "dangerous daughters of Eve". From the writings of the early Church Fathers then, emerged the two most popular and persistent images of woman that have pervaded Western attitudes until the present: the Virgin and the Temptress.

The Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, two forces were instrumental in formulating definitions of femininity; the Church and the Aristocracy. While the Church continued in its view of woman as the supreme temptress and the most dangerous of all obstacles in the way of salvation, the Aristocracy was espousing the romanticized secular ethic of courtly love. As a consequence,

"women found themselves perpetually oscillating between a pit and a pedestal" (Power, 1938, p. 401). Both positions, however, accepted as natural, the subjection of women.

St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) best illustrates the official Church attitude, particularly in his discussion of the creation of woman. His writings were influenced by both the early Church Fathers and the naturalistic world view of Aristotelian metaphysics and natural science. Unlike Augustine and the patristic view, he accepted the positive value of the body, believing, as did Aristotle, in the integration of body and soul. "The body has an excellence with respect to its end as long as it serves that end" (Aquinas in McLaughlin, 1974, p. 261). However, he stated that the final fulfillment of the human, which was life with God, is achieved by the operation of a rational soul, once again denying the value of the body. Further, he equated the male with rationality, accepting Aristotle's notion that man is ordered to the more noble activity of intellectual knowledge whereas woman is created solely for procreative purposes (Rogers, 1966; McLaughlin, 1974).

During his discussion of the creation in Summa Theologica, he argued that the subordination and inferiority of Eve were established before the Fall. His position is based on the primacy of Adam's creation. Adam was both the first in time and the founder of the human race, including the material source for the first woman. His essence is defined as intellectual activity,

which is equated with the essence of human nature, whereas Eve's essence is identified with her sexuality. Woman is therefore "naturally subject to man, because in man the discernment of reason predominates" (Aquinas in Rogers, 1974, p. 66). It is true that woman was created as a helper to man, but only as a helper in "generation", freeing the male for the higher aim of intellectual operations. This is her sole contribution as helpmate since "man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works..." (Aquinas in Rogers, 1974, p. 66). Aquinas also accepted the Aristotelian notion that a girl child represents a defective human being, a "misbegotten male". Since her essence; that is, her sexuality, was equated with a weaker and more imperfect body, it clearly affected her intelligence and, subsequently, her moral judgement:

> The inequality between male and female relates thus to the moral as well as physical and intellectual realms, and it seems to be the woman's body that is the ultimate source of her inferiority and subordination to the male.
>
> (McLaughlin, 1974, p. 218)

Even woman's generative function was considered inferior to the contribution of the man. She assumes the passive role as receptacle for the "active" male sperm which was believed to carry the complete human embryo <u>in potentia</u>. Her function is simply to provide space and nourishment for the fetus to grow. This acceptance of Aristotelian biology gave a so-called

"scientific" basis to the anti-female tradition inherited from the Fathers.

The Church continued to emphasize woman's seductive powers and assert the supremacy of virginity over marriage. Virginity was the cardinal feminine virtue, associated not only with purity, but with a whole mode of mystification including private property, precious stones and magical effects. Women readily accepted its reification since it served as a particular kind of security for them:

> Women have one great advantage: it is enough for them to cultivate a single virtue if they wish to be well thought of. Men, however, must have several if they wish to be esteemed. A man must be courteous, generous, brave and wise. But if a woman keeps her body intact, all her other defects are hidden and she can hold her head high.
>
> (Philippe de Navarre in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 141)

Since virginity was so highly prized, medieval literature contained various "remedies for damaged maidenheads" which ranged from herbal concoctions to the use of a leech inserted "very cautiously" on the labia the day before the marriage ceremony (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973). Defloration was viewed as a corruption of the female body and a reminder of woman's status as the daughter of Eve. (It also served to point out the inferior nature of her body.) In fact, she was unable to enter certain religious orders, regardless of her piety (McLaughlin, 1974). Quoting Augustine's statement that "nothing so casts down the

manly mind from its height as the fondling of woman, and those bodily contacts which belong to the married state", Aquinas considered sexual intercourse, at best, a venial sin (Rogers, 1966). Even the female religious, who had renounced sexuality for the life of the celibate, never escaped the male fear of danger and contamination from the seductive powers of women. For example, elaborate curtains were erected between a dying woman and the priest who administered last rites to avoid the possible danger of eye contact between the two (McLaughlin, 1974). Only in the resurrected state is the notion of true equivalence of the sexes given substance by Aquinas. (That, at least, is a change from the position that women become "male" after resurrection, a position held by some Church authorities.)

The Middle Ages saw the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the Western Church, which reigned supreme until the end of the period. There were great pilgrimages to her shrines and magnificent cathedrals were built in her honour. Almost every church not specifically her own had a chapel in her name. Rather than acting as a positive force for the evaluation of women, however, the roles given her by theologians and myth often reflected the popular misogynism of the medieval period. Very often she was used to fulfil the sexual fantasies of the celibate men who wrote about her:

> Your Creator has become your spouse; he has loved your beauty... He has coveted your loveliness and desires to be united

> to you... Hurry to meet him, that you may be kissed with the kiss of the mouth of God and be drawn into His most blessed embraces...
>
> (Rupert of Deutz in McLaughlin, 1974, p. 248)

However she was defined, her role in human salvation was always passive, auxiliary and secondary in comparison to Christ; her behavior was appropriate to her sex.

The mundane counterpart of the cult of the Virgin was the cult of the Lady, also referred to as courtly love, which was invented by the medieval aristocracy. Each knight was required to worship and serve a noble lady to the point of imperilling his soul and defying the Church, if need be, for her love. The rules regulating courtly love were both romantic and rigid:

> ...the lover should ideally not know his lady; it was best if he had but glimpsed her once or twice at church. His love must always be hopeless and he must never allow either the lady herself or anyone else to discover the identity of his beloved. Ideally she should be married to someone else for young girls were strictly watched and were not allowed to associate with men until they were married. The lover must sigh for his lady and compose in her honor songs and poems. He must defend her charms and beauty against all the world, asserting her superiority over all other women. Each lover strove to prove himself the most distraught by love and his beloved the most delectable of womankind.
>
> (LaMonte, 1949, pp. 384-385)

This, of course, was theory; practice differed widely from it. And it is important to note that while knights promised in

their oath to respect women, this applied only to the noble classes and in no way "limited the predatory nature of the knight as regarded women of the lower classes" (LaMonte, 1949, p. 384). Nonetheless, the process of placing women on a pedestal had begun. Books written for girls in the context of courtly love paid great attention to appearance: "The girl of courtly love must be clean, bathe often, (and) use perfume so that her lover believes her body full of flowers." Emphasis was placed on the importance of obedience and adaptability to please men. Little intelligence was necessary and girls were discouraged from reading on the pretext that they might be exposed to evil. They were told to speak rarely, and never at meals, since a presumed female characteristic was endless and meaningless chatter (McLaughlin, 1974; Rogers, 1966). A young woman's exclusive aim in life was to prepare for marriage and once married, she was expected to remain faithful to her husband even if he was unfaithful to her. The Chevalier de la Tour Landry, a fourteenth-century knight, in a treatise written for his daughters, counselled them to avoid jealousy and to give the husband complete liberty. Obedience was essential even if the husband was evil, "for God has given him to you - and besides, the more evil a husband, the more important is a good wife" (de la Tour Landry in McLaughlin, 1974, p. 231). Thus we see the emergence of the familiar double standard which identifies the wife with virtue and piety. He also noted that gentlemen in a rage frequently struck their spouses and pointed

out that corporal chastisement of a wife was specifically permitted by canon law (Power, 1938). (In certain ways, religious tracts showed greater respect for women than did those written in a courtly context. While secular texts treated women exclusively as sex objects, Christian writings were more likely to acknowledge the woman as a person with a mind. Also the Church's insistence on consent between two parties as the prerequisite for Christian marriage was a significant advancement for women. Feudal marriages were arranged by the father, almost exclusively for economic reasons, and often took place before the girl was fourteen years of age.) Although the concept of chivalry was limited to the Aristocracy and undoubtedly was little more than a veneer, it was one of the most powerful ideas to evolve during Medieval times and had great influence on subsequent ages.

Women in the Middle Ages had very few rights in law. In England, a married woman generally owned nothing and could not incur debts. In fact, her status was like that of a child:

> Every (married woman) is a sort of infant... It is seldom, almost never, that a married woman can have any action to use her wit only in her own name: her husband is her stern, her prime mover, without whom she cannot do much at home, and less abroad... It is a miracle that a wife should commit any suit without her husband.
>
> (The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights, in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 145)

Succession and inheritance were based on feudal right which varied from region to region. Spanish law treated the sexes

as equal in inheritance whereas English law invariably favoured the male. Similar differences were found in the distribution of property from country to country. But it is generally the case that legally, a woman was not considered a free and lawful person. Many craft regulations excluded female labour, primarily for the reason that the competition of women undercut the men (Power, 1938). Also, women were given lower wages than men for the same work on the grounds that they produced and ate less (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973). Although they practiced highly skilled trades, they were rarely admitted to craft guilds and never as fully fledged members. In addition, they could not hold office and had no say in the guild's regulations regarding the trade (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973).

The area of private rights, however, was a different matter. The feudal lady often assumed all the responsibilities of her husband while he was away (frequently for years at a time), on crusades, pilgrimages, and fighting wars. These responsibilities involved such things as managing both the home and the estate, handling budgets, looking after the needs of the tenants, collecting rents, supervising the farming, and so on. It also required that she be familiar with the intricacies of tenure and feudal law. Many women of the nobility and gentry entered Holy Orders; the nunnery was essentially a class institution, and so, very often they chose this life for other than religious reasons. It solved the problem of an unmarried girl of the upper class by

providing her with a dignity greater than marriage. In fact, it was the only respectable option open to gentlewomen apart from marriage. The cloistered life also gave scope to abilities which otherwise would have been wasted, since nuns enjoyed an education far better than was available to most men outside the cloister. The bourgeoise housewife usually worked closely with her husband and knew enough about his business to handle it effectively while he was gone. Women, both married and single, had a monopoly on the textile and food-producing industries, such as spinning and ale-making, which could be carried on in the home. Thus, although wives were virtually devoid of legal rights, they achieved considerable de facto equality in everyday life (Power, 1938; Rogers, 1966).

It is from the literature of this period that the stereotype of the shrewish, henpecking wife develops. As both Rogers and Power note, attacks on married women were unusually numerous during this time. This is owing, in part, to the clerical influence which maintained a generally negative attitude toward marriage, but it also reflected a patriarchal resentment of women's self-assertion. Thus it is not surprising that Patient Grisilde represents the male fantasy of the ideal wife in the Middle Ages. The story is an example of slavish obedience to one's husband. Grisilde is married to a nobleman. Without a single indication of protest or grief, she allows her husband to take each of her two children away from her, presumably to be killed,

stating that nothing he willed could displease her. Then he informs her that she, too, must go since he is taking a new wife. Cheerfully, she returns to her father's hut. (Not surprisingly, she was originally one of her husband's serfs prior to her marriage.) Finally, she is informed by the nobleman that the "bride" is really her daughter who is alive and well, as alive and well, so it turns out, as is her son. Her husband had simply been testing her marriage promise to comply happily with his every wish. With humility, she thanks him for sparing her children and states that she is now willing to die on the spot knowing that he loves and favours her. As is the case with almost all fairy tales, they live happily ever after. Rogers (1966) justifiably refers to this story as "patriarchal wish-fulfillment (carried) to its furthest possible extreme" (p. 78). The more typical portrait of wives was represented by Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Not only has she had five husbands, but she has managed to master them all. She is the prototype of the traditional bad wife, a gossip, a drinker, an extravagant dresser, a liar, a gold digger and a manipulator. She is also a remarkably astute judge of character which allows for her mastery over her men. The character is a composite of all the qualities a woman is not supposed to have and represents a wife's shameless defiance of her proper position and behaviour. It is to Chaucer's credit that she is such an engaging character. As Rogers (1966) points out, her cheerfulness, vitality, and frankness make her attractive.

It is also to Chaucer's credit that she is as much a critic as she is an object of the popular misogyny of the time.

The Middle Ages then, while encompassing the feminine stereotypes of the virgin and whore, modified each image. Firstly, physical attractiveness took on importance as a result of the ethic of courtly love. Thus the ideal knight's lady was both virtuous and beautiful. Secondly, the shrewish wife in Medieval literature was more likely to be disobedient and insubordinate than lustful. The addition of these two important dimensions to already existing concepts of femininity have persisted into contemporary times.

The Renaissance and the Reformation

The Renaissance was characterized by a curiously mixed attitude toward women. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the fashionable literary pre-occupation of the time, referred to as La Querelle des Femmes, or, the dispute about women. As Kelso (1956) notes, four attitudes can be distinguished in the various writings; woman as necessary evil; woman as inferior but comparable to man in her own special role; woman as equal; and, woman as superior. Needless to say, this last view was considered extremist and had few proponents in comparison with the others. It appears to have been used primarily as a vehicle for wit and satire, and was not really intended to be taken seriously. The rationale for

the first point of view was essentially the same in tone and content as the vilification of women during medieval times, although the inspiration for it appears to have been based more on profit than religious fervor (Rogers, 1966). Using such sources as the Bible, ancient philosophers and history, mythology and medieval physiology, these writers viewed women as thoroughly evil. The most typically cited faults were; licentiousness, instability, disloyalty, intractability to God's commands, drunkenness and gluttony, pride, vanity, avarice, greed, seditiousness, quarrelsomeness, vindictiveness, and talkativeness (Kelso, 1956). In fact, it appears there was no evil of which women were incapable. To state a favourite summary used by men who advocated this position:

> If all the seas were ink, land and fields parchment, trees pens, and all who know how to write were to write without ceasing, all the evil in women could not be expressed.
> (in Kelso, 1956, p. 12)

Other rationales used to justify her inferior nature were legal and economic dependence, her subjection to men and her exclusion from public office and the professions. Woman should not be educated because education would simply refine and heighten her natural depravity. Her value was in her indispensability for continuation of the race, although one writer went so far as to wonder why God did not improve the method of propagation by eliminating women altogether.

The second point of view argued that woman was created for

a particular purpose, that of wife and mother, and had special attributes that made her as perfect to do her work as man was to do his. It was acknowledged that woman's nature was inferior, but without blame (or remedy, for that matter), and was the natural order of things. These writers refuted the notion of bodily weakness as proof of mental weakness by logically arguing that if brute strength was so important, beasts would be more noble than men. Woman was not an imperfect man. "The divine image is perfect in her and in man equally, and the same portion of soul is in both" (in Kelso, 1956, p. 17). Her goodness, however, did not give her equality with men. While she was naturally suited for motherhood, he was naturally suited for command and thus she was rightfully subject to him in both private and public affairs. Although this view restores some dignity to women, it essentially reflected prevailing beliefs of conditions as they existed at the time.

The third position, that of woman as equal, was primarily the result of two factors; the rise and spread of humanism, and the increasing literacy of upper-class women. The second factor is particularly noteworthy in that it marked the beginning of women writing both in their own defence and as critics of the prevailing attitudes about them. One of the first women to enter the dispute was Christine de Pisan (c. 1363 - c. 1431). Her major argument, as with others who took this position, was that the apparent incapacity for women to do anything but domestic duties

was a direct result of their lack of education. It was highly inadequate to argue woman's subjection as necessary or just, on the grounds of man-made interpretations of God's existing laws. People had free will and not all the effects of creation can be taken as willed by God. Imperfections were the result of men (laws included). However, equal education for girls and boys would eliminate important differences between the sexes:

> If it were customary to send little girls to school and to teach them the same subjects as are taught to boys, they would learn just as fully and would understand the subtleties of all arts and sciences. Indeed maybe they would understand them better... for just as women's bodies are more soft than men's so too their understanding is more sharp... If they understand less it is because they do not go out and see so many different places and things but stay home and mind their own work. For there is nothing which teaches a reasonable creature so much as the experience of many different things.
>
> (de Pisan in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 181)

Erasmus (c. 1467 - c. 1536), the leading humanist of his day, lent his authority to the idea of a liberal education for young girls, but he limited his support to daughters of the rich and nobly born (Kelso, 1956; O'Faolain and Martines, 1973). Not all proponents of this view emphasized education. Some argued that any differences between the sexes were the result of different occupations, but to consider one more worthy than the other made no more sense than valuing an artisan more than a

merchant or a philosopher more than a doctor. In summary, Agrippa (c. 1486 - c. 1535) stated in an exercise entitled, "On the Nobility and Excellence of Women" (1529):

> The only difference between man and woman is physical... Woman does not have a soul of a different sex from that which animates man. Both received a soul which is absolutely the same and of an equal condition. Women and men were equally endowed with the gifts of spirit, reason, and the use of words; they were created for the same end, and the sexual difference between them will not confer a different destiny...
>
> (Agrippa in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 184)

Although dialogues and debates about the nature of women continued for three centuries, very little in the way of general attitudes about women changed during the Renaissance. They continued to be valued for chastity, obedience, silence, discretion, and modesty. The training of a well-born girl was directed, in all respects, toward her role as wife and mother. The rise of secularism made the choice between marriage and dedication to the church no longer viable, since marriage alone was seen as the proper vocation for women. The perfect woman, in general Renaissance theory, is strikingly similar to the mid-twentieth century ideal:

> The perfect woman... was the wife, married to a man well born and virtuous, and shining in her restricted realm with her own qualities, but only like the moon, with reflected light.
>
> (Kelso, 1956, p. 78)

The decline of the ascetic ideal resulted in mutual aid and comfort, as well as preservation of the race and avoidance of sin, as a legitimate purpose of marriage, albeit one which received far less emphasis than the other two. The most important duty of the husband continued to be the exercise of his authority, although the prerogative of corporal punishment became a topic of discussion. No one denied that a husband had the legal right to beat his wife, but some argued that it should be used only as a last resort, and many warned that to hit a wife under any circumstance was foolhardy: "Striking angers a good woman and makes a bad one worse." A vivid picture of the ideal Renaissance husband and wife is summed up in the following discourse by a fifteenth-century Florentine merchant and is worth quoting in its entirety:

> After my wife had been settled in my house a few days, after her first pangs of longing for her mother and family had begun to fade, I took her by the hand and showed her around the whole house. I explained that the loft was the place for grain and that the stores of wine and wood were kept in the cellar. I showed her where things needed for the table were kept, and so on, through the whole house. At the end there were no household goods of which my wife had not learned both the place and the purpose. Then we turned to my room, and, having locked the door, I showed her my treasures, silver, tapestry, garments, jewels and where each thing had its place...
>
> Only my books and records and those of my ancestors did I determine to keep well sealed... These my wife not only could not read, she could not even lay hands on them. I kept my records at all times... locked up and arranged in order in my study, almost like sacred and religious

objects. I never gave my wife permission to enter that place, with me or alone. I also ordered her, if she ever came across any writing of mine, to give it over to my keeping at once. To take away any taste she might have for looking at my notes or prying into my private affairs, I often used to express my disapproval of bold and forward females who try too hard to know about things outside the house and about the concerns of their husband and of men in general.

[Husbands] who take counsel with their wives... are madmen if they think true prudence of good counsel lies in the female brain... For this very reason I have always tried carefully not to let any secret of mine be known to a woman. I did not doubt that my wife was most loving, and more discreet and modest in her ways than any, but I still considered it safer to have her unable, and not merely unwilling, to harm me... Furthermore, I made it a rule never to speak with her of anything but household matters or questions of conduct, or of the children. Of these matters I spoke a good deal to her...

When my wife had seen and understood the place of everything in the house, I said to her, 'My dear wife... you have seen our treasures now, and thanks be to God they are such that we ought to be contented with them. If we know how to preserve them, these things will serve you and me and our children. It is up to you, therefore, my dear wife, to keep no less careful watch over them than I.'

...She said she would be happy to do conscientiously whatever she knew how to do and had the skill to do hoping it might please me. To this I said, 'Dear wife, listen to me. I shall be most pleased if you do just three things: first, my wife, see that you never want another man to share this bed but me. You understand.' She blushed and cast down her eyes. Still I repeated that was the first point. The

second, I said, was that she should take care of the household, preside over it with modesty, serenity, tranquillity, and peace. That was the second point. The third thing, I said, was that she should see that nothing went wrong in the house.

...I could not describe to you how reverently she replied to me. She said her mother had taught her only how to spin and sew, and how to be virtuous and obedient. Now she would gladly learn from me how to rule the family and whatever I might wish to teach her.

...Then she and I knelt down and prayed to God to give us the power to make good use of those possessions which He, in His mercy and kindness, had allowed us to enjoy. We also prayed... that He might grant us the grace to live together in peace and harmony for many happy years, and with many male children, and that He might grant to me riches, friendship, and honor, and to her, integrity, purity, and the character of a perfect mistress of the household. Then, when we had stood up, I said to her: 'My dear wife, to have prayed God for these things is not enough... I shall seek with all my powers to gain what we have asked of God. You, too, must set your whole will, all your mind, and all your modesty to work to make yourself a person whom God has heard... You should realize that in this regard nothing is so important for yourself, so acceptable to God, so pleasing to me, and precious in the sight of your children as your chastity. The woman's character is the jewel of her family; the mother's purity has always far outweighed her beauty... Shun every sort of dishonor, my dear wife. Use every means to appear to all people as a highly respectable woman. To seem less would be to offend God, me, our children, and yourself.'

...Never, at any moment, did I choose to show in word or action even the least

> bit of self-surrender in front of my wife. I did not imagine for a moment that I could hope to win obedience from one to whom I had confessed myself a slave. Always, therefore, I showed myself virile and a real man.
>
> (L. B. Alberti, in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, pp. 187-189)

Interestingly, one type of woman emerged during the Renaissance, the court lady, who had a less submissive and confined role. Her function was to serve her Lady and her Lord, as was the courtier, her male counterpart. In this sense, the court was her profession and she was educated for that task. In many respects, she was expected to be the equal of the courtier in wit and intelligence as well as in noble birth. The art of conversation held a high place in court circles and she was encouraged to cultivate the art. This required knowledge of a great many things and the judgement to select what was suitable for each discussion. Much of the life at court was artificial, in the tradition of courtly love, but it provided the lady at court with an excellent education and presented a setting in which knowledge and wit were encouraged and valued in women.

The Reformation or revolution against the medieval church brought about some fundamental changes affecting the condition and status of women. Most important were the changes with respect to marriage. Luther (1483-1546) emphasized the dignity and spirituality of marriages, advocating that the married state "...is not only equal to all other states but preeminent over them all, be they

Kaiser, princes, bishops... For it is not a special, but the commonest, noblest state" (Luther in Douglass, 1974, p. 295). In fact, the protestant tradition rejected in principle the requirement of a vow of celibacy from anyone, and many priests, in the early years of the Reformation, felt pressured to take a wife in order to experience the new theological view of marriage (Douglass, 1974). Calvin (1509-1564) generally shared Luther's conviction of the goodness of marriage, finding it absurd that, on the one hand, it was a sacrament in the Roman Church, and on the other it was considered so filthy and polluting that priests were barred from it. The most striking change with respect to the status of women was that divorce came to be viewed as a genuine possibility in cases where the bond of marriage had been manifestly dissolved (Douglass, 1974; O'Faolain and Martines, 1973). Luther cited impotence, disbelief and adultery as legitimate grounds for divorce with the adultery of husbands equally as serious as that of wives. The Reformation as a whole, however, continued to be extremely reluctant to grant divorces and permission was seldom given. Nonetheless, it allowed for the possibility of remarriage without the death of a spouse, something that was impossible in the Roman Church.

Although concern for improving the education of women flourished primarily in humanist circles, the Reformation, consistent with its teaching of a priesthood of all believers, provided impetus for public education of both boys and girls. It

was important that all members of the Reform church were capable of reading the Bible and other religious material, and Luther was instrumental in establishing schools for the education of children as was Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a leading reformer:

> As we acknowledge that all the faithful, however poor their place and low their condition, are made in the image and likeness of God and are redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, to be remade and reformed in that image, the good and loyal ministers of the people of God must work to remake and reestablish that image by means of the doctrine of salvation. And this they shall teach to the young [above all through the reading of the Holy Bible. Hence be it ordained] that all the children of Christians, girls as well as boys, be carefully taught to read.
>
> (Bucer, in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, pp. 194-195)

After 1536, all children in Geneva were required to attend school and were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and catechism (Douglass, 1974).

In theory, the Reformation represented a giant step forward for women. In fact, not all the effects were positive. First, with the disappearance of the nuns in the Reform church, women lost their one official role in the institution. It was centuries before they could be ordained to the ministry and they were not permitted to be elected as laypersons to the official boards that governed the churches. The Reformation also carried with it a reversion to the patriarchy of the Old Testament, particularly as it related to the teachings of St. Paul. The courtly

tradition which revered women was viewed as "disgusting effeminacy". Men such as John Knox (1502-1572) were greatly disturbed by the increasing independence of women during the Renaissance and their anxiety was aggravated by the fact that two Catholic queens ruled England and Scotland during the mid-sixteenth century. Knox revived the old misogynistic arguments of St. Paul, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, etc., as his authorities for the rationale that no man should be ruled by a woman:

> The Holy Ghost doth manifestly [say]: I suffer not that women usurp authority over men: he sayeth not, that woman usurp authority over her husband, but he nameth man in general, taking from her all power and authority, to speak, to reason, to interpret or to teach, but principally to rule or to judge in the assembly of men. So that woman by the law of God and the interpretation of the Holy Ghost is utterly forbidden to occupy the place of God in the offices aforesaid, which he hath assigned to man, whom he hath appointed and ordained his lieutenant in earth: secluding from that honor and dignity all women... And therefore yet again I repeat that, which I have affirmed: to wit, that a woman promoted to sit in the seat of God, that is to teach, to judge or to reign above man, is a monster in nature, contumely to God, and a thing most repugnant to His will and ordinance.
>
> (John Knox in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 262)

Most Protestant ministers, while less extreme than Knox, both accepted and preached Paul's teachings on wifely subjection. The more liberal position was that a wife should obey her husband through love rather than fear, and that woman was seen as

subject, but not abject (Rogers, 1966). It is during this time that moral writers began to moderate their criticism of women and to substitute harsh references of the female sex for a more genteel justification for their subjection. George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, provided one of the first examples of this change in tone when he consoled his daughter for her position of total dependency by stating:

> You have more strength in your looks than we have in our laws, and more power by your tears than we have by our arguments.
>
> (Savile in Rogers, 1966, p. 149)

The attitude reflects the faint beginnings of the assumptions of women's fragility and frailty which was to reach its peak in the nineteenth century. However, writings such as Savile's were still rare. Condemnations of the female sex remained morally and socially acceptable until well into the seventeenth century and neither religious nor secular writers during this period felt any need to moderate their criticism.

The Reformation brought with it adamant moral structures:

> ...'respectable' women gained more rights, but people of 'easier' morals suffered in the ensuing climate, and... certain cities would see the execution of alleged prostitutes.
>
> (O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 22)

Closely tied with this attitude, was Luther's reassertion of the reality of the Devil in search of souls and his warning that much of the world of the flesh and spirit were under Satan's

influence. His theology reinforced the existing belief in witchcraft and consequently extended the scope of the witch craze during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kors and Peters, 1972). Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the complex origins and motivations of the witch hunts, (see Cohn, 1975), what is of relevance is that the victims were primarily women. In fact, the witch was almost by definition a woman, (Cohn, 1975), and the inquisitors, clergymen and priests. There appears to be little doubt that the witch crazes were, in large part, a major expression of misogyny in actual life and were connected with many aspects of antifeminism.

While war was being waged on witches, women were waging their own war. They achieved some prominence as workers and agitators in the more extreme affirmations of Protestantism. Gaining inroads as activists in religious matters led them to become more active in the political sphere as well. As O'Faolain and Martines (1973) point out, many wives of political refugees during the English Civil War and Interregnum (1642-1660), arranged the escape of husbands, solicited pardons for them and ran their estates in their absence. A group of anonymous women petitioned parliament on behalf of four leaders of the Levellers who had been arrested during the War. On April 23, 1649, hundreds attended the House of Commons but were forced out at gunpoint. The women returned the next day and were turned back once again. Their petition was finally presented on May 5th, with

the following introduction:

> The Humble Petition of divers well-affected women of the Cities of London and Westminster, etc., Sheweth, that since we are assured of our creation in the image of God, and of an interest in Christ equal unto men, as also of a proportional share in the freedoms of this Commonwealth, we cannot but wonder and grieve that we should appear so despicable in your eyes, as to be thought unworthy to petition or represent our grievances to this honorable House.
>
> Have we not an equal interest with the men of this Nation, in those liberties and securities contained in the Petition of Right, and the other good laws of the land? Are any of our lives, limbs, liberties or goods to be taken from us more than from men, but by due process of law and conviction of twelve sworn men of the neighborhood?
>
> (The Thomas Tracts in O'Faolain and Martines, 1973, p. 268)

The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century

The Restoration was characterized predominantly by a reaction against Puritan austerity, and with it came a weakening of patriarchal attitudes toward women. This shift is particularly evident in the drama of the time in which the heroines were portrayed as having more independence with respect to courtship, conversation and relationships with husbands. There appeared to exist an implicit recognition of a more equal status for women which resulted in a playful rivalry between the sexes. However, as Rogers (1966) notes, Restoration literature frequently

portrayed sophisticated relationships between men and women as cold-blooded exploitation by the stronger party, regardless of sex. Women were as false and as cruel as men, but while men were justified in deceiving and abandoning women, the reverse was not the case. A cynical tone about love developed at this time, in part a reaction against the tradition of courtly love which had romanticized and idealized the woman. In time, the type of poems exalting love and women disappeared altogether.

From the early eighteenth century through the nineteenth, denunciations of woman's seductiveness, vindictiveness and propensity for evil were replaced by paternal guidance and "playful ridicule of her frivolity" (Rogers, 1966, p. 174). A common attitude was to assume that she was simply a rather large child; playful, entertaining, but with limited capacity for reason. And reason was the great eighteenth-century ideal. While counselling his sixteen-year-old son on managing the opposite sex, the Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773) described women as "...only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes with; but for solid reasoning, good sense, I never knew in my life one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially and four-and-twenty hours together" (Chesterfield in Rogers, 1966, p. 178). How should one handle them? He advised the following:

> A man of sense only trifles with them,
> plays with them, humours and flatters them,
> as he does with a sprightly, forward child:

> but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with serious matters; though he often makes them believe that he does both; which is the thing in the world that they are proud of, for they love mightily to be dabbling in business (which, by the way, they always spoil).
>
> (Chesterfield, in Rogers, 1966, p. 178)

Many writers were more discreet than Chesterfield and concealed their disparagement of women with sentimental eulogies. Richard Steele (1671-1729), for example, prided himself on being a "Friend to Woman" and yet his attitudes toward them are not significantly different from those of Chesterfield. He assumed woman's inferiority to man, continued to point out weaknesses and deplored any ambitions she may have other than that of pleasing the man she marries. In the words of Steele's ideal wife:

> ...[my husband is] the End of every Care I have; if I dress 'tis for him, if I read a Poem or a Play 'tis to qualify myself for a Conversation agreeable to his Tastes: He's almost the End of my Devotions, half my Prayers are for his happiness.
>
> (Steele in Rogers, 1966, p. 179)

Overt literary attacks ceased to be acceptable, but were replaced by patronizing works that belittled women. As Rogers (1966) notes:

> From the Restoration to the end of the eighteenth century, there is a gradual softening of the prevalent attitude to women, combined with an increasing tendency toward polite disparagement. The savage exposure of women in the Restoration, which went along with an implicit recognition of their equality, yielded - with the increasing propriety of the eighteenth century - to gentle criticism;

> but writers who felt they must abstain from harsh attacks on women often compensated by patronizing them.
>
> (p. 187)

One of the prime targets of attack during the eighteenth century was the learned woman. Education was not as acceptable for women as it had been in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, regardless of the fact that reason was so highly valued. Some women continued to be educated by male relatives or friends but the woman who aspired to succeed in an intellectual field became the butt of the wit and comedy of the time. Nonetheless, girls of 'good' families were certainly not illiterate. They were taught French, reading, writing, and enough arithmetic to keep household accounts, although their skills in singing, dancing and needlework were considered more important. Daughters of merchants and rich tradesmen were sent to boarding schools to develop these 'accomplishments' while girls of the aristocracy were usually educated at home. The amount of education a young woman of the nobility received depended largely on the attitude of her parents, and a girl with a scholarly father or mother was encouraged to study far more than one sent to a boarding school. As a result, the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century had a surprisingly large number of women, who:

> ...despite the general assumption that women were born with lesser intellects than men, and despite the very severe social prejudice against women who published work under their own names, did manage to employ their gifts to some purpose and leave behind

> them a legend of learning - in many cases with published proof of intellectual gifts of the highest order.
>
> (Adburgham, 1972, p. 40)

Most of these women, however, did not challenge the accepted and prevailing attitudes about education with respect to their sex. They were content to study quietly in the privacy of their own homes and to keep chronicles or journals of their day-to-day lives. The Quakers were the first exception to this rule. Margaret Fell advocated women preachers in the early 1650's and Barbara Blangdon was imprisoned in 1654 for preaching in the West Country of England (Adburgham, 1972). Outside the Society of Friends was Mary Astell, who, in 1694, wrote a treatise advocating a College for women which would provide an alternative to "mercenary marriage or humiliatingly dependent spinsterhood". Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was a strong advocate of the principle of equal opportunity for women and considered it a "barbarity" to deny them learning. In an essay entitled, "The Education of Women", Defoe argued that Astell's plan was too restrictive for women and the atmosphere of the proposed College too much like that of a nunnery. He felt that women could establish good discipline for learning without excessive spying or supervision. [Although Defoe advocated equality for women he fell victim to the stereotype of the "old Maid", whom he described as:

> ...A Furious and Voracious kind of Females; nay even a kind of Amazonian Cannibals, that not only Subdued, but Devoured those that

> had the Misfortune to fall into their Hands. If an Old Maid should bite anybody, it would certainly be as Mortal, as the Bite of a Mad-Dog.
>
> (Defoe in Rogers, 1966, p. 202)]

But the prevalent attitude of the day was that genuine reason or knowledge was beyond the reach of women and their proper place was within the domestic confines of marriage and the family.

In France women of the Aristocracy held a high place in society prior to the Revolution. Many, like Madame De Staël were famous for their salons which were attended by the leading literary and political figures of the day. These women were noted for their charm, their talent for conversation, and their ability to influence literary and political movements. During the Revolution women made some legal gains; a wife could sue her husband for divorce and the consent of the mother as well as the father was required for the marriage of children under age (Durant, 1975). Although women were not permitted to vote as a result of the Revolution they gained new freedom in manners and morals:

> The women are everywhere - at plays, on public walks, in libraries. You see very pretty women in the scholar's study room. Only here [in Paris], of all places on earth, do women deserve such influence, and indeed the men are mad about them, think of nothing else, and live only through and for them. A woman, in order to know what is due her, and what power she has, must live in Paris for six months.
>
> (Napoleon in Durant, 1975, p. 134)

In the economic sphere, important events were occurring which were to have a major effect on the economic position of women (Clark, 1968). Before the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution the family had been an economic unit and marriage in an important sense, was an industrial partnership. However, the effect of the Revolution, coupled with the rise of Capitalism, resulted in the breakdown of this economic unit. First, the rapid increase of wealth permitted upper-class women to withdraw from all connection with business, providing unprecedented leisure time. Second, individual wages took the place of a family wage and the wife did not necessarily share in the benefits received by the husband. Finally, the withdrawal of wage-earners from the home to the premises of the employer prevented wives and daughters from learning the trade and consequently they were denied employment in the husbands' occupation. As a result, women were effectively cut off from almost all productive activity, forcing those of the lower classes into abject poverty through death or desertion of husbands and creating an idle, parasitic life for women of the privileged classes.

The concept of the idle wife delighted the eighteenth-century bourgeois because it exhibited his status and kept his wife in a dependence consonant with his position. Such an attitude was encouraged by the new sensibility espoused by Rousseau (1712-1778), which sought a return to the patriarchal roots of society and the simple ways of the "noble savage".

Nowhere is this attitude more apparent than in his famous and influential treatise on education, entitled, Emile, (1762). It should be noted that his book was written just prior to the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799); an age characterized by the belief in non-transferable human rights. It becomes apparent, however, that human rights, for Rousseau, did not include equal education for boys and girls nor did they include the abolition of women's subjection to men:

> Men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence differs in degree; man is dependent on woman through his desires; woman is dependent on man through her desires and also through her needs; he could do without her better than she can do without him. She cannot fulfill her purpose in life without his respect; she is dependent on our feelings, on the price we put upon her virtue, and the opinion we have of her charms and her deserts... A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.
>
> (Rousseau, 1972, p. 328)

He cautioned that young girls should be subjected to "constant and severe" restraint and ought to have little freedom because; "...they are apt to indulge themselves too fully with regard to such freedom as they have; they carry everything to extremes..." He stated that; "even the tiniest little girls love finery; they are not content to be pretty, they must be admired..." They were

also in his words, "...more eager for adornment than for food" but with proper control, this concern with appearance could lead to the development of charm, a quality Rousseau highly valued in women. The most important trait for a woman, however, was gentleness so that "...she should early learn to submit to injustice and to suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband without complaint;..." While he admitted that a faithless husband was unfortunate, in his opinion, a faithless wife was far worse: his crime was mere infidelity, whereas her crime was tantamount to treason. (An intriguing bit of personal history about Rousseau bears mentioning. After settling in Paris in 1741, he established a relationship with a servant girl who bore him five children, each of whom he turned over to a foundling hospital to be raised.)

All this was more than Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) could bear. In her historic treatise, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in 1792, she attacked Rousseau's image of the perfect woman on the grounds of his questionable logic:

> He... proceeds to prove that woman ought to be weak and passive, because she has less bodily strength than man; and hence infers, that she was formed to please and to be subject to him and that it is her duty to render herself agreeable to her master - this being the grand end of her existence.
>
> (Wollstonecraft, 1967, pp. 128-129)

As to his observation that the female sex was apt to excessively indulge in what was allowed them she pointed out that mobs and slaves had also indulged themselves in the same excesses when they finally broke loose from authority. Paraphrasing Rousseau's position with respect to women, she states:

> [He] declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself. He carries the arguments, which he pretends to draw from the indications of nature, still further, and insinuates that truth and fortitude, the corner stones of all human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour.
>
> (Wollstonecraft, 1972, p. 58)

Her response to this position was short and to the point: "What nonsense!" While she acknowledged that men and women had different duties to fulfill, she maintained that they were human duties and that the same principles should regulate them.

It is Wollstonecraft's contention (as it was Christine de Pisan's, some four hundred years before), that if women appeared frivolous and silly, this was a natural consequence of their station in life and their lack of an education in those subjects that "really deserve the name of knowledge". It most certainly was not a result of an inherently inferior nature:

> Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty. - If the latter, it will be expedient to open a fresh trade with Russia for whips...
>
> (Wollstonecraft, 1972, p. 58)

Wollstonecraft, however, aroused little response in her day and it would be another seventy years before the English feminist movement got under way. As Flexner states:

> What is so astonishing about the Vindication is not that Mary wrote it, but that she was alone in raising the issues that she did, in a period of social change first signaled by the rebellion of the American colonies against British rule and then by the tremendous upheaval of the French Revolution. Hers was the only audible voice raised to assert that women, as well as men, had an inalienable right to freedom, that they too were human beings... almost no one else echoed her belief in the importance, or even existence, of women as thinking persons.
>
> (Flexner, 1973, p. 12)

By the end of the eighteenth century, the concept of the feminine had shifted away from the theological definition of the previous three centuries. Woman was no longer the seductive daughter of Eve, whose subjection was a result of her part in the Fall. Instead, emphasis was placed on her alleged natural limitations: weakness, timidity, incapacity for reasoning, insensibility to abstract ideas, and lack of judgement and responsibility. This prevailing view of woman was to continue into the nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth Century

The Victorian Age idealized the feminine to the point of absurdity. Women were the delicate sex who inspired men and elevated their sensibilities. They were the nobler half of humanity; more religious, more devoted, more altruistic, more pure than men could ever hope to be. Their vocation was self-sacrifice and devotion to husband and children. In fact, they were considered largely responsible for the loftiness of English Christian civilization (an opinion that would have horrified their Puritan forefathers two hundred years before). Charles Kingsley's allegorical picture of the "Triumph of Woman" is representative of this attitude: Woman moving through a desert in which flowers spring up beneath her steps, inspiring intelligence and tenderness in everyone she meets. Coupled with this adoration was the conviction that woman was unable to care for herself (and thus must be protected), and was naturally weak (requiring that she take a dependent and subordinate role at home and within the larger society). The proper state for woman during Victoria's reign was best illustrated in the novels of the period:

> The typical virtuous heroine of the Victorian novel is a softened version of Grisilde - rewarded for exploitation by being venerated as a saint. Women, it is implied, are wonderfully angelic and superior to men for giving up their lives to male happiness - but there is no question that this is what they should do.
> (Rogers, 1966, p. 193)

Treatises and sermons describing the proper role of women abounded. A book of minor morals written in the 1840's listed tending the sick, raising infants, communicating elements of knowledge to the young, and blessing friends who are "in the vale of tears" as the proper duties of the Victorian lady (Crow, 1971).

Middle-class gentility during the nineteenth century became a citadel of respectability, prudery and boredom. Marriage and motherhood were the only acceptable careers for women and even much of the customary household work was slipping from their hands (Holcombe, 1973). Factories were taking over such traditional home occupations as the spinning of thread, the weaving of cloth, the making of clothes and the preparation of foods. With increasing wealth, middle-class families were hiring more servants to do the remaining domestic chores and the care of children was turned over to nurses, governesses and tutors. It was unthinkable that wives should work outside the home since they had become the status symbol of their husbands' success and to do <u>any</u> work implied that there was not enough money to pay others to do it. Eventually the idea of work became synonymous with degradation, the rationale being that a lady who worked was invading the rights of the lower classes who lived by their labour. The chief aim of a middle-class woman was to make "a good match" and become a graceful ornament in her husband's home where she played the piano, sang, painted, and in

general, was essentially useless. Even sex was a pastime that she was unable to enjoy since Victorian sensibility had banned it from the respectability of everyday life. Crow's description of sexual attitudes between husband and wife are revealing:

> Ideally women would produce children by parthenogenesis; failing that, male impregnation should take place in a dark bedroom into which the wife endured the connection in a sort of coma, thereby precluding any stigma of depravity which would have been incurred by showing signs of life. Silence was important. If what went on in the dark bedroom was never mentioned, then, by a reversal of the psychological process which gives substance to a thought merely by the naming of it, sex could be dematerialized by ignoring it.
>
> (Crow, 1971, p. 25)

Not only was the topic of sex banned from polite conversation, but clothing was designed to cover as much of the woman as possible. Clergy and doctors warned of the dangers inherent in any sexual activity. (Syphilis was not uncommon amongst the gentry, Sir Randolph Churchill being one of the better known victims of the disease.) Instruments were sold to prevent masturbation and censorship prevailed in novels that even hinted at anything sexual. One result of such intense sexual repression was the flourishing of prostitution. (Prostitutes generally fell into three categories; women who were kept by men of independent means, women who lived in apartments and maintained themselves by their trade, and women who lived in brothels.) In the mid-eighteen hundreds, the estimated number of prostitutes in London alone,

ranged as high as eighty thousand (Crow, 1971).

While middle and upper-class women were languishing in idleness, women in the lower classes were working. Wages for working women varied but, in relation to men, were extremely small. Many young girls turned to prostitution in order to survive. The most secure job for a lower class woman was that of domestic servant because, although wages were tiny, bed and board were assured. By mid-century, almost one-third of the female population in Great Britain was employed (Crow, 1971). The most common areas of employment next to domestic service were textile and dress manufacturing and agriculture. With the decline of the domestic industries, however, many women were forced into brutalizing occupations such as coal-mining and match manufacturing. These women, however, had no place in the Victorian concept of the feminine.

There were, nonetheless, female types which received the hostility of the patriarchal society in which they found themselves. They included the familiar domineering wife, the old maid, and the blue stocking. The old maid provided a convenient butt for jokes during the Victorian era. She was frequently characterized as ugly, unpleasant, and continually in pursuit of men. Although such portraits were cruel caricatures, unmarried women probably did appear eager for marriage. This, however, is hardly surprising since they were trained entirely for the purpose of attracting a man and had no resources within themselves to

make them valued members of the community. The blue stocking, by refusing to conform to the intellectual restrictions of her sex, was another popular victim of nineteenth century hostility. (The term blue stocking originated from meetings in the home of Elizabeth Montague where literary discussion replaced the usual cards and gossip. One of the guests, Benjamin Stillingfleet, wore blue stockings instead of the customary white ones.) (Benét, 1965). Initially she was portrayed as a humourous character, but with the development of the feminist movement, attacks became more overt and bitter.

The stultifying image and conditions of the Victorian lady created the first stirrings of revolt which were to develop into a fully fledged women's movement. The movement began in the parlours of middle-class women but in time touched almost all parts of society. There were three major areas of concern in which the movement made an impact: women and education; the legal status of women; and, suffrage.

As late as the 1850's, the education of the middle-class girl focused on her accomplishments in music, dancing, and embroidery. Most girls were taught by governesses, women of the same class who had neither fathers nor husbands to support them. Their pay was extremely low, and their status in the household uncertain. Since their knowledge hardly exceeded that of their pupils, Queen's College in London was established in 1848, and Bedford College one year later, specifically to train

governesses and teachers (These references to dates are with respect to changes in Britain and are taken from Kazantzis unless otherwise stated). Many of the women who graduated from these Colleges were later instrumental in improving education for women. Two graduates, Miss Letitia Buss and Miss Dorothea Beale, pioneered academic girls' schools, which included curricula consisting of mathematics, science, and classics, as well as sports such as field hockey that previously were taught only to boys. In 1870, the first Education Act put elementary education within the reach of all children and in 1874, Girton College became the first University for women in Britain. London University opened its degrees to women in 1878 as did all English Universities founded after this time. Although women were allowed to sit examinations at Oxford and Cambridge by the 1880's, Oxford did not award degrees to women until 1920 and Cambridge, not fully until after the Second World War.

Prior to 1839, single women had few rights, and a married woman had no existence as a person in law. Virtually all her property became the property of her husband and any money she acquired after marriage was automatically his. This included earnings as well as inheritances. She could not leave her husband nor remove her children without his express consent. He could will their home and property away from her, including anything that was hers before marriage. All children born were the sole possession of the husband and if he chose, he could deny his wife access to them. If a woman left her husband, he

could refuse all maintenance and demand any money she earned after separation for himself. In 1839, Parliament passed the first Custody of Infants Act which gave a mother limited rights of access to her children. It was not until 1870 that all wives gained the right to their own earnings and in 1882, they were permitted in law to possess their own property and personal belongings. The first Divorce Act of 1857 required that a wife prove both adultery and some other ground such as cruelty while a husband could divorce his wife for adultery alone. This law reflected the Victorian standard of sexual morality which was lax for men and rigid for women. Divorce was difficult and expensive, making it available primarily to the privileged classes who rarely took advantage of it because of the social and religious stigma. A woman was able to obtain a separation order, maintenance and custody of children by 1878 if her husband was convicted of assault. Those women who could not obtain a divorce or separation remained in a legally helpless position until 1891, when a husband could no longer have his wife imprisoned in his home if she refused to live with him.

The first generation of female suffragists in England emerged in the 1830's and 1840's. In 1832, "Orator" Hunt, a radical, presented a petition to Parliament on behalf of Miss Mary Smith, which stated that "every unmarried female, possessing the necessary pecuniary qualifications, should be allowed to vote" (Fulford, 1957, p. 33). The First Reform Act, however,

specifically excluded women from the franchise. By votes for women, these original suffragists did not mean all women, but rather, those single or widowed who were able to meet the same property qualifications required of men. It would be many decades before the appeal would broaden to include both married and poor women. Despite growing conviction and support, the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, while extending the franchisement of men, still refused to include women. The result was growing militancy which erupted into violence and only terminated as a result of the outbreak of the First World War. As the century drew to a close, battle lines were drawn between those who endorsed the fight for the rights of women and those who defended the patriarchal status quo. It was difficult not to hold a viewpoint on this crucial issue, and people of all professions entered into the debate.

CHAPTER III

"... the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."
Hamlet

The Playwrights

The 1890's represented an important transition period in the history of the English theatre. During this time, the rise of a new artistic sensibility resulted in a 'modern' drama which attempted to deal with contemporary issues and characters in a more realistic manner. While musicals and melodramas continued as the most popular types of theatre, a serious self-consciousness of artistic and social ideals began to develop, with playwrights searching for novelty in form, subject matter and moral views (Nicoll, 1938). The impetus for this new trend was primarily the result of the impact and influence of Ibsen.

Ibsen's drama was introduced to the English theatre in 1880, with a play entitled Quicksands, or the Pillars of Society. The response, according to the Academy, was poor (Hudson, 1951). In 1884, Henry Arthur Jones was asked to rewrite A Doll's House in order to make it more palatable for English audiences. He did so by having the husband take the blame upon himself, arranging for the forged note to be stolen and destroyed, and creating a "happy ending" in which the husband and wife remain

together (Hudson, 1951). The first unadulterated version of the play was performed in London in 1889, and although it was extended from seven to twenty-one performances, it was a financial disaster. It did, however, focus attention on a critical battle which had been brewing since 1880.

There were two schools of thought as to the proper focus and function of a play (Dickinson, 1920; Hudson, 1951; Nicholl, 1959). The old school, referred to as the Ancients and led by the critic, Clement Scott, believed that the playwright's business should not be with social ethics or philosophy but with the telling of a story. As critics, they focused their attention on reporting; they announced the title of a new play, explained its plot, and discussed the relative merits of the performers. The play itself was of little consequence provided that it represented the great majority of respectable middle-class opinions. The new school of thought was represented by the critic, William Archer, and was referred to as the Moderns. Advocates of this position (who included in their numbers George Bernard Shaw) were excited by the 'realism' of Ibsen and believed that the play itself was the most important thing. They argued that drama should deal with moral, intellectual and political questions. The conflict resulted in a major shift in emphasis in British theatre:

> Love of incident and grotesque characterization had appealed in the past; now a deeper psychological note and a franker treatment

of intimate life became a fashion.
(Nicoll, 1959, p. 81)

Another major factor which influenced the theatre of the 1890's revolved around the 'woman' issue. Women's increasing demands for equality with men were slowly producing results. The Married Woman's Property Act had been passed in 1882 and many societies for Women's Suffrage were in existence at that time. Women had already won entrance into universities and were slowly making inroads into the professions as well. As with any major social change, opinions were strong and varied as to the value of such change. Consequently the most debated topic of the day was the topic of 'woman', and the drama began to reflect the trend in the last decade of the 19th century. The result was a proliferation of plays about women; the Wronged Wife, the Woman with a Past and the New Woman. As Hudson (1951) notes, the period was the beginning of a boom for actresses.

Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934)

It was in this climate of artistic transition and preoccupation with the rights of women that Arthur Wing Pinero wrote The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, which opened at the St. James Theatre in London in 1893. The Westminster Review in July, 1893, called it; "...in the boldest sense of the word the only realistic play produced by an English man..." (p. 106). It is important to note that in retrospect, the "boldness" refers

only to its style and subject matter. In one sense, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray was technically revolutionary in that it was the first performed English play to dispense with both the soliloquy and the aside. (Interestingly, this was more accidental than intentional. In the original version of the play, the final speech is made by Cayley Drummle and not Ellean. Drummle's lines are: "And I-I've been hard on this woman! Good God, men are hard on all women!" (Pinero, Prompt Copy, 1892). The lines were intended to be spoken directly to the audience. However, Pinero, who also directed the play, deleted them during rehearsal since he was unhappy with them from the director's point of view. Thus, by the simple stroke of a pen, just prior to performance, he was assured of a place in the history of the English theatre.) The subject matter of the play was considered daring because it deals seriously with the marriage of a respectable member of the upper class to a woman with a past. Pinero, who had already been successful as a writer of comedy, was experienced and adroit enough to be sufficiently shocking without greatly offending the British public. Initial response in the United States, however, was less favourable. When Mrs. Tanqueray was introduced there, critics considered it unfit for public consumption: "How a courtesan would look and act if married to a respectable gentleman is not a subject to be represented on the stage" (in Fyfe, 1930, p. 146). Nonetheless, in terms of the problem the play raised and the solution it presented,

nothing is included to offend strict middle-class morality and conventionality. As Hudson points out, Pinero was not intending to propound a new moral code.

The character of Paula Tanqueray is crucial to the play and many critics agreed that she was remarkably well-drawn. During the first act, she is described by the playwright as "a young woman of about twenty-seven: beautiful, fresh, innocent-looking" (Pinero, in Hamilton, 1917, p. 81), and yet the audience is aware that she has already been mistress to a number of men for many years. Her initial entrance verifies their expectations of such a woman, when she arrives at Aubrey Tanqueray's rooms late at night, just prior to their wedding, clearly in defiance of socially acceptable behaviour. When Aubrey expresses conventional concern about what his manservant will think of her calling so late, she responds; "Do you trouble yourself about what the servants thing? ... They're only machines made to wait upon people - and to give evidence in the Divorce Court" (p. 81). During the course of their conversation, Pinero includes other little touches that provide further clues to Paula's character. For example, she mentions that she is hungry and when Tanqueray offers her some game pie, she refuses, stating; "No, no, hungry for this. What beautiful fruit! I love fruit when it's expensive" (p. 82). Her purpose for the late visit is to give Tanqueray a letter she has written which includes a list of all her 'adventures' so that he will be completely aware of her past

and have an opportunity to change his mind about the marriage if he so desires. Her feelings for him are loving and considerate; "...It's because I know you're such a dear good fellow that I want to save you the chance of ever feeling sorry you married. I really love you so much; Aubrey, that to save you that, I'd rather you treated me as - as the others have done" (p. 83). She later lets it be known that had he accepted her offer of setting him free, she would have killed herself. Pinero has established in the first act that Paula is impulsive, emotional, charming and attractive, and very much wants her marriage to Aubrey to work.

In the second act, the audience is introduced to Tanqueray's daughter by his previous marriage. The contrast in character between Paula and Ellean is glaring. Ellean has recently returned home from a convent where she was raised by nuns following her mother's death. Throughout the play she is consistently referred to as "a saint" and "an angel". At one point, a bachelor friend of Aubrey's named Cayle Drummle urges him to treat her more like an "ordinary flesh-and-blood young woman". In his opinion, "...of all forms of innocence, mere ignorance is the least admirable" (p. 108). His reasoning is to expose her to the world in order to find a suitable husband:

> DRUMMLE (to Aubrey): Take my advice, let her walk and talk and suffer and be healed with the great crowd. Do it and hope that she'll some day meet a good, honest fellow who'll make her life complete, happy, secure.

Although Ellean is affectionate and loving with her father, she remains polite but cold and aloof toward her step-mother.

Paula is jealous of Ellean and Aubrey's affection for each other; she feels left out and bored. It has been established in the first act that marrying a woman with Paula's background is social suicide, or as Drummle puts it; "You may dive into many waters, but there is one social Dead Sea!" (p. 62). This has proven to be the case. Mrs. Cortelyon, their neighbour and good friend of the first Mrs. Tanqueray, has refused to call, setting an example for the rest of the gentry in the area. Paula misses companionship and craves respect. In order to gain it, she focuses all her attention on Ellean:

> PAULA (to Aubrey): Teach her that it is her duty to love me; she hangs on to every word you speak. I'm sure, Aubrey, that the love of a nice woman who believes me to be like herself would do me a world of good. You'd get the benefit of it as well as I. It would soothe me; it would make me less horribly restless...
>
> (p. 100, my italics)

In desperation Paula turns directly to Ellean but is rebuffed;

> PAULA: Ellean, why don't you try to look on me as your second mother? Of course there are not many years between us, but I'm ever so much older than you in experience. I shall have no children of my own, I know that; it would be a real comfort to me if you would make me feel we belonged to each other... Perhaps you think I'm odd - not nice... A few years ago I went through some trouble, and since then I haven't shed a tear. I believe if you put your arms around me just once I should run upstairs and have a good cry...

(With a cry, almost of despair, Ellean turns from Paula, and sinks on to the settee, covering her face with her hands)
(p. 103)

Mrs. Cortelyon finally comes to call, but does so in order to take Ellean with her to Paris, and to London for the season. Aubrey allows it, and in doing so, deeply hurts Paula:

PAULA (to Aubrey): What do you mean by taking Ellean from me? And how do you take her? You pack her off in the care of a woman who had deliberately held aloof from me, who's thrown mud at me! Yet this Cortelyon creature has only to put foot here once to be entrusted with the charge of the girl you know I dearly want to keep near me!
(p. 123)

Aubrey's motive for doing so is that he is concerned about exposing Ellean to Paula's "light, careless nature", as he puts it to Drummle. Although he has married her, he believes Paula will be a bad influence on his daughter;

AUBREY (to Drummle): Ellean is so different from - most women; I don't believe a purer creature exists out of heaven... there's hardly a subject you can broach on which poor Paula hasn't some strange, out-of-the-way thought to give utterance to; some curious, warped notion. They are not worldly thoughts unless, good God! they belong to the little hellish world which our blackguardism has created; no, her ideas have too little calculation in them to be called worldly...
(p. 107)

He is also very aware that Ellean will never be accepted in polite society with Paula at her side.

In retaliation, Paula extends an invitation to Lord and Lady Orreyed to visit, despite the fact that Tanqueray has

expressly forbidden to have them as house guests. Ironically, his reason is that Lady Orreyed was once a courtesan and friend from Paula's past, and having married Lord Orreyed, they are both banned from respectable homes. (It is characteristic of Aubrey that in his desire to 'reform' Paula, he expects her to comply with conventional morality, all the while reminding her that she is not a part of it.) Drummle's portrait of Lady Orreyed is vivid in its condemnation:

> ...a lady who would have been, perhaps has been described in the reports of the Police or the Divorce Court as an actress... To do her justice, she is a type of a class which is immortal. Physically, by the strange caprice of creation curiously beautiful, mentally, she lacks even the strength of deliberate viciousness. Paint her portrait, it would symbolize a creature perfectly patrician; lance a vein of her superbly-modelled arm, you would get the poorest vin ordinaire! Her affections, emotions, impulses, her very existence - a burlesque! Flaxen, five-and-twenty, and feebly frolicsome; anybody's in less gentle society I should say everybody's property!...
> (p. 61)

Once the Orreyeds have arrived, Paula regrets her decision. Lord Orreyed is a drunken and rather pathetic character, which he attributes to his marriage:

> SIR GEORGE ORREYED: Jus' because I've married beneath me, to be chucked over! Aunt Lydia, the General, Hooky Whitgrave, Lady Sugnall - my own dear sister! - all turn their backs on me. It's more than I can stan'
> (p. 169)

Mabel Orreyed is characterized as pretentious, shallow and

supercilious. Paula discovers that she can no longer tolerate people like them:

> PAULA (to Drummle): ...I - I hate the Orreyeds!... Somehow or another, I - I've outgrown these people. This woman - I used to think her "jolly"! - sickens me.
>
> (p. 135)

Paula's relationship with her husband has not improved. He reminds her that when she was Ellean's age, she "hadn't a thought that wasn't a wholesome one, ...an impulse that didn't tend towards good..." etc., but that now she has no right to expect friendship with a young woman as innocent as Ellean. Rather than defend herself, Paula "...drops upon the ottoman in a paroxysm of weeping and cries 'O God! A few years ago!'" (p. 143). Pinero has made it quite clear that Paula agrees with Tanqueray's assessment of her but recognises that the situation is now beyond her control.

The play reaches its conclusion in the fourth act when Ellean returns from Paris engaged to be married. It is noted by everyone, including her father, that love has made her gentle and tender. It has been mentioned earlier in the play that Tanqueray's first wife was "your cold sort... I don't believe she allowed [Aubrey] even to squeeze her fingers. She <u>was</u> an iceberg!" (p. 66). When Ellean announces that she is in love, Aubrey is relieved: "I thought you took after your poor mother a little, Ellean; but there's a look on your face tonight, dear, that I never saw on hers - never, never" (p. 100). Ellean

attempts to be more friendly to Paula at her father's request. However, all this is short-lived when it is discovered that Paula was once the discarded mistress of her fiance. When Ellean finds out, every pretense at friendship and, indeed, every politeness, is dropped:

> ELLEAN (to Paula): I have always known what you were! ...From the first moment I saw you I knew you were altogether unlike the good women I'd left; [the nuns in the Convent where she had been raised] - directly I saw you I knew what my father had done. You've wondered why I've turned from you! There - that's the reason!
>
> (p. 185)

Paula realises that "...the future is only the past again, entered through another gate" (p. 190), that she can never escape her past, and that when she loses her physical attractiveness, Aubrey will "sicken" at her. She also realises that he will eventually consider her an immoral woman as Ellean and "all wholesome folks" do. When Paula has left the room Aubrey acknowledges that some of the responsibility for her life must be attributed to the men who patronize such women:

> AUBREY (to Drummle): Curse him! [Ellean's fiance] Yes, I do curse him - him and his class! Perhaps I curse myself too in doing it. He has only led "a man's life" - just as I, how many of us, have done!
>
> (p. 193)

The play ends with Ellean's announcement that Paula is dead. Only then does she show some compassion:

> ELLEAN (to Aubrey and Drummle): Killed - herself? Yes - yes. So everybody will

> say. But I know - I helped to kill her.
> If I'd only been merciful!
>
> (p. 195)

The play was an immediate critical and financial success. As late as 1917, Clayton Hamilton was to claim:

> This ambitious and successful composition was immediately recognized as the greatest play originally written in the English language that had been produced on any stage in the English-speaking world since the night of May 8th, 1777, the date of the first performance of The School for Scandal ...It is now possible to assert with certainty that The Second Mrs. Tanqueray was the only great play that had been written in the English language for one hundred and sixteen years.
>
> (p. 3)

With the exception of William Archer and George Bernard Shaw, reviewers agreed that Paula was an evil woman who deserved her fate. The Westminster Review of July, 1893, described Aubrey as gentleman-like, and "one who gives her money, pleasure and luxury". Ellean was considered "pure and healthy minded". In their opinion Paula was juxtaposed with the other two by her perversity, frivolity, and thoughtlessness: "...after a slight futile attempt to live up to the level of respectability and decency, this ex-prostitute feels bored, is tortured by envy, is growing soured, despairing and miserable to such a degree... she takes her own life and ends in misery, as she lived in it." The Athenaem Review saw Paula as shallow, impressionable, self-willed and hysterical; her punishment was self-earned and inevitable. Although Ellean was considered

somewhat puritanical, this was attributed to her innocence. They strongly supported her instinct to "shrink from intimacy with an erratic, irresponsible woman". Only Archer and Shaw saw Paula in a non-conventional way. Archer, writing in the Fortnightly Review of August, 1893, acknowledged her jealousy and childish rage but considered it a result of her inability to elicit one "gleam of sympathy" or affection from Ellean: "Though not mistress of herself, she is mistress of the situation." He also believed that although she has little self-control, her self-command is perfect. Archer described Aubrey as somewhat commonplace; "...a good fellow, fairly intelligent, well-meaning, but not very wise". Paula, however, he considered accomplished (she plays the piano) and intelligent - a "surprising" mixture of the "thoughtful, resolute, even noble woman and the elfish, passionate, vicious child". With all her errors and foibles, she has "a proud and upright nature".

Shaw's criticism was that Pinero did not go far enough. Writing in 1895, he bemoaned the fact that Pinero did not interpret the character of Paula, but simply described her as the ordinary person would see and judge her. In his estimation, Pinero was unable to rank with first-class playwrights when he allowed Paula to judge herself as others did rather than showing; "...that however she may have found by experience that her nature is in conflict with the ideals of differently constituted people, she remains perfectly valid to herself, and despises

herself, if she sincerely does so at all, for the hypocrisy that the world forces on her instead of for being what she is" (Shaw, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 49). He nonetheless considered her a well-executed stage figure, "...even allowing for the fact that there is no cheaper subject for the character draughtsman than the ill-tempered sensual woman seen from the point of view of the conventional man" (Shaw, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 47). With the advantage of some seventy years of hindsight, Shaw's indictment of Pinero seems accurate. While it is obvious that Pinero was genuinely fond of Paula and recognized the hypocrisy, the artificiality and the glaring double standard that contributed to her situation, his fundamental weakness was that he was unwilling or unable to see the world from her point of view. Instead, he merely described or judged her in terms of conventional morality.

Popular opinion, however, supported the notion of the evil of Paula. Indicative of the general public's views were excerpts from a sermon delivered by T.W.A. Lund, Chaplain of the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin in Liverpool (Lund, 1894). According to Lund (and presumably good Christians at the time), Paula was:

> ...a distinctly evil woman, of a distinctly evil class. She is a canker in Society, an influence that can only make for harm either to man or woman. Judged by her exterior, she presents hardly a redeeming feature.
>
> Innocent as no doubt she once was, her history for some years is that of a mercenary siren,

> who has sold her charms in the best market over and over again... she is obviously a ruined woman; ...Her life has left her a mere bundle of undisciplined emotions. She is the owner of an ill-regulated mind and a rampant will... She is simply driven by passion for new sensation in a world where the rapid sequence of sensation has been life... How intense and absorbing is her vanity. And then there is that jealousy which is almost a madness... She is as far from London as from Heaven... could anyone be more petulant, wayward and selfish, blown here and there by every gust of passion, without a thought of what happiness she might create for those around her... She is what she herself describes... in her better moments - a character that is but a ghost, a wreck, a ruin, a libel upon womanhood.
>
> (Lund, p. 5-8)

Disdain for the character of Paula continued for the next twenty years, indicative that attitudes remained much the same. The North American Review of July, 1908 described her innocence as counterfeit and her freshness, "the freshness of a callous heart". She was seen as incapable of devotion and ungrateful to Aubrey. Adjectives used to describe her were "vain, restless, petulant, unstable, arrogant, and jealous". Fyfe (1902) argued that it was not merely the outward consequences of her acts that destroyed her but, "her very nature bears the impress of perverted instincts". Armstrong (1913) felt that Paula makes no real attempt to "get out of the mud but merely lies there and squeals and endeavors to drag other people down with her" (p. 229). In his opinion, it is her temperament which precipitates the tragedy.

and not the circumstances of her life. The popularity of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, not only during the 1890's but well into the early 1900's, indicates that the Victorian concept of the feminine still prevailed until that time. This concept, as noted in the previous chapter, encompassed such characteristics as physical fragility, delicate sensibility, abhorrence of sex, purity and innocence, and the sanctity of husband, home and motherhood. Ellean exemplified all that a young woman should be; Paula stood as a vivid example of women who stray from the proper path. The characters of Paula and Ellean are extreme in their differences. Yet that too, was representative of the Victorian sensibility toward women. The Reverend Mr. Lund expressed this view concisely when he stated: "For men at most differ as Heaven and Earth, but women, worst and best as Heaven and Hell" (Lund, 1894, p. 12).

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

In many ways, Shaw belongs more appropriately with the feminists included in the following chapter than with the playwrights. His 'unwomenly women' stand in marked contrast to the portrayal of women from the conventional point of view. As a socialist, it was his contention that society should ensure that each person live in reasonable economic comfort with guarantees of political and social rights. His plays were used as vehicles for his ideas since:

> I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world, excepting only the example of personal conduct; and I waive even this exception in favour of the art of the stage, because it works by exhibiting examples of personal conduct made intelligible and moving to crowds of unobservant unreflecting people to whom real life means nothing.
>
> (Shaw, in Preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1957, p. 185)

The subject matter of his plays reflected his concerns and included such topics as slums, (Widower's Houses), prostitution, and its economic roots, (Mrs. Warren's Profession), marriage, (The Philanderer, Candida, Getting Married, Misalliance) and religion, (St. Joan, Androcles and the Lion). Unlike Pinero, he refused to romanticize situations or provide endings to his plays compatible with the conventional system of morals. He wrote drama on the basis of his own "highly sophisticated and perceptive understanding of human nature and behaviour as he encountered it in the world of actual experience" (Matthews, 1969, p. 18). His critical principle in judging all plays, including his own, was that the performance should be true to the play and the play, true to life (at least, life as he saw it). As Margaret in Fanny's First Play observes; "...reality is pretty brutal, pretty filthy, when you come to grips with it. Yet, it's glorious all the same. It's so real and satisfactory" (p. 286).

Shaw was particularly concerned with the rights of women;

"Men are waking up to the perception that in killing women's souls they have killed their own" (1932, p. 8). His plays reflect his belief that women should have had the right to vote and sit on governing bodies (although he angered suffragettes by declaring that if given the vote, women would be just as idiotic as men in their use of it), as well as the right to education, and to full economic, social and personal independence. His purpose was to create a New Woman on the stage, with the hope that her example would extend to real life. Thus by studying what Shaw's heroines are, one can discern what the conventional woman was not.

The difference between the traditional view and Shaw's unconventional attitude is particularly apparent when comparing Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray with Mrs. Warren's Profession, also written in 1893. Kitty Warren, like Paula, is a woman with a past. However, Kitty's past is also her present and she has no intention of changing it. Like Paula, she wishes to be reconciled with her daughter, but not at the expense of abandoning her means for a livelihood:

> The life suits me; I'm fit for it and not for anything else... And then it brings in money; and I like making money. No; it's no use; I can't give it up - not for anybody. (pp. 283-84)

Kitty asks her daughter Vivie to accept her on her own terms, unlike Paula, who is willing to endure whatever is necessary for Ellean's friendship. Paula also feels remorse over her past

indiscretions and wishes to begin a new life. In the end, she not only fails at her goal, but is forced to commit suicide as the only possible recourse for her situation. Pinero dooms Mrs. Tanqueray because of her past. At no point, however, does Shaw villify Kitty Warren with respect to her profession. Although she will never be reconciled with her daughter, there is no question that she will continue on in life convinced of the justness of her attitude. As Kornbluth (1959) says: "...Shaw merely shows Mrs. Warren to be slightly inconvenienced" (p. 14).

The response of Ellean and Vivie toward their respective mothers differs significantly. Ellean is disgusted by her stepmother's past and thoroughly rejects her on moral grounds. Any sympathy she has for Paula is only apparent after Paula's suicide. While Vivie and Mrs. Warren go their separate ways at the end of the play, the reason is not a moral one. In fact, when Kitty tells her daughter her reasons for becoming a prostitute, Vivie is deeply moved. However, Mrs. Warren, in continuing her work, does not fit into Vivie's life and her desire for a business career:

> I am my mother's daughter. I am like you;
> I must have work and must make more money
> than I spend. But my work is not your work,
> and my way not your way. We must part.
> (p. 284)

By providing an excellent education for Vivie, Mrs. Warren has created a gulf between them in attitude and expectations. Vivie rejects the mother-daughter relationship on practical and not

moral grounds.

Unlike Pinero, Shaw was interested in exposing the economic roots of Mrs. Warren's profession. He describes the abject poverty from which Kitty and her three sisters have come. One half-sister had worked in a whitelead factory for twelve hours a day on starvation wages until she died of lead poisoning. Another married a government labourer who provided her with three children and drank away his small salary. Kitty and her sister decide to choose prostitution over destitution and death:

> Do you think we were such fools as to let other people trade in our good looks by ploying us as shop-girls, or bar-maids, or waitresses, when we could trade in them ourselves and get all the profits instead of starvation wages? Not likely.
>
> (p. 249)

Kitty expresses regret for the few employment opportunities open to women and considers their economic disadvantage extremely unfair, but as a realistic business-woman, she is aware that: "...I should have been a fool if I'd taken to anything else" (p. 250). Shaw, through the character of Kitty Warren, exposed the reality of the working-class woman which was ignored by Pinero and others who upheld the Victorian ideal. Women who worked under brutal conditions for meager wages were simply not thought of as existing. Shaw went further in his analysis by exposing the economic basis behind male-female relationships. As Kitty tells her daughter, respectable middle-class women are brought up to "catch some rich man's fancy" and get the benefit

of his money by marrying him. Women in her profession do exactly the same thing without the marriage licence. Poor women, in particular, cannot expect a man with money to marry beneath his class, so it is pointless to hold out for an offer. In effect, Shaw, through Mrs. Warren, was calling most marriages a legalized and respectable form of prostitution. Thus, he saw "the sin of a misspent life" as attributable to a hostile world and Kitty is vindicated in terms of that world's unreasonable demands. For Pinero, who reflected the conventional attitude, the misspent life was inexcusable, circumstances leading to it were not even explored, and nothing short of destruction would make amends for it.

For Shaw, Vivie was the heroine of the play. She is described as; "...an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly-educated young middle-class Englishwoman. Age 22. Prompt, strong, confident, self-possessed. Plain business-like dress, but not dowdy." (p. 214). Unlike the Victorian ideal of the "womanly woman", Vivie is independent in her plans for a career, in her ability to choose her own interests (she is not in the least attracted to the arts except as they relate to business), and she has no desire or intention to marry. Her treatment of her mother and others with whom she comes in contact is brusque and unemotional except in exceptional circumstances. She is not moved by her mother's "cheap tears", because she knows the price she would have to pay in order to

satisfy Kitty and she is unwilling to pay it since the cost is her independence. When Mrs. Warren finally leaves for good at the end of the play, Vivie is intensely relieved, and has no difficulty plunging back into her work as an accountant "where she soon becomes absorbed in its figures" (p. 286). As Lorichs (1973) notes, there had never been a heroine like Vivie seen on the English stage before.

Although Mrs. Warren's Profession was completed in 1894, it was censored by the Lord Chamberlain who, as Shaw pointed out, had the absolute power to close any play that offended him. It was not performed until 1902 and then by a private club in order to escape the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction. (The first public performance in England did not occur until 1925.) Critics attended the private performance and, not surprisingly, general reaction was negative. In the preface to the play, Shaw gives examples of some of the reactions. One critic felt that Mrs. Warren was presented too sympathetically. As Shaw notes: "Nothing would please our sanctimonious British public more than to throw the whole guilt of Mrs. Warren's profession on Mrs. Warren herself" (p. 200). The reviewer of the St. James' Gazette declared that "the tendency of the play is wholly evil because it contains one of the boldest and most specious defences of an immoral life for poor women that has ever been penned" (p. 201). The play was performed in New York on October 30, 1905 and the whole cast was arrested on the charge of disorderly conduct (Evans, 1976). They

were released on bail and eventually acquitted but the critical response was indicative of the outrage that the general public felt. The notice from the New York Herald on October 31st was typical of the press reception. The reviewer described the play "morally rotten", "an insult to decency", a glorification of "debauchery", etc. He considers the characters "wholly immoral and degenerate". That Vivie should declare the choice of "shame" better than that of poverty is "vileness and degeneracy brazenly considered" (in Evans, 1969). Victorian sentiment is well illustrated in another American review of the play:

> That his [Shaw's] main idea is not the discussion of the social evil, so-called, seems to be demonstrated by the fact that not one of the characters of the play refutes the sophistical reasoning of the courtesan mother, with the statement which we judicially know that the prostitute is not ordinarily driven to her choice of calling by anything other than her motive to satisfy the desires of her sense without work;... Surely the playwright is not so superficial a scholar that he is ignorant that the ordinary prostitute is on the same plane with the ordinary vagrant in this regard. In fact the statute classes her with the vagrant.
>
> (in Block, 1939, p. 50)

Shavian women can be classified into four major types (Molnar, 1953). The first is the Womanly woman who sacrifices herself for her husband and children. She displays eternal affection and is consistent in her self-abnegation. This is the ideal Victorian woman who believes her place is in the home. Examples are Judith in The Devil's Disciple and Raina in Arms and

the Man. The second type is what Molnar refers to as Life Force women. They are sexually dynamic and aggressive but their object is not personal romance. Rather, they represent a vital life force which is universal and which aims at perpetuation of human-kind. The best drawn example of this type of woman is Ann in Man and Superman. Third is the Emancipated woman who is free from romantic illusions, realistic, and self-reliant. Eliza in Pygmalion is in the process of emancipation while Lina in Misalliance and Fanny in Fanny's First Play have completed it. The last category is the New Woman, as exemplified by Major Barbara and Saint Joan. Whereas the Emancipated woman represents the ideal of the Feminist movement in Shaw's time, "the New Woman represents that ideal towards which the Emancipated woman herself must strive" (Molnar, 1953, p. 8). The Emancipated woman is still rebellious and assertive of her individuality in order to win her freedom. The New Woman, however, is already free and has moved beyond personal goals to the establishment of the good society as Shaw envisioned it. This type of woman represents freedom and responsibility and is, in fact, the Shavian ideal of the complete human being.

Until the concept of the "New Woman" became more generally accepted in the 1920's, critical response to Shaw's heroines was usually unfavourable. Not untypical was an article by Mrs. Constance Barnicoat in the Fortnightly Review of March, 1906. In general she considered Shaw's women "unlovable" or

"unpleasing". They were either "hard as nails like Vivie... or ...merely bleating old sheep like Mrs. Whitefield [in Man and Superman]" (p. 524). Mrs. Warren she considered "mean and revolting", and an "unredeemed and unredeemable brute". In her opinion many of his female characters lacked "all sense of womanly restraint" while others have not "a grain of common sense". Only two of his women were worth knowing, in her opinion, and they were Candida and Major Barbara. However, Mrs. Barnicoat's stereotypic beliefs and wholesale generalizations about class affected her perception of Candida's character:

> ...that a lower middle-class English woman, who might reasonably be supposed to have the intensely jealous, monopolising instincts of her class, should have been able to look so sensibly on all her husband's typists, one after the other, being in love with him, is hardly credible. No; in real life the Reverend James Mavor Morell would have had either to dispense with typists altogether or to get one of his own sex. Every woman of Candida's class will admit the wisdom of her conduct, and then go and not do likewise.
>
> (pp. 520-21)

Her most serious charge was that Shaw never portrayed a "genuine lady". And by this statement, Mrs. Barnicoat represented the general middle-class Victorian ideal that continued to pervade the early years of the twentieth century. Edwardian England had begun, but Victorian sentiments lingered on.

Clayton Hamilton, an influential critic and no great admirer of Shaw's, felt that in particular Shaw was unable to

create and portray women well:

> All that the intellect can do, Mr. Shaw's mind can do; but what the emotions can do is outside his element... This is, of course, the main reason why Mr. Shaw cannot draw the character of women. Women, though by no means deficient in intelligence, are often more emotional than intellectual... He makes his women monsters of exaggerated intelligence.
>
> (Hamilton, 1924, pp. 66-67)

Hamilton did not extend his criticism, which is meant to be general, to any of Shaw's male characters. Nor did he consider Shaw's apparent inability to convey emotion important with respect to Shaw's men. This double standard was precisely what Shaw enjoyed attacking. The women in his plays are subjected to equal critical and comic scrutiny as the men, and with a consistent single standard. As Watson (1964) notes, there were two parts to Shaw's judgement of the individual; realism and vitality:

> The Shavian heroine (or hero) is expected to assess herself and her choices without illusion. And between her alternatives she is expected to choose fearlessly on the side of life. No price is too high for the vital person to pay... Shaw does not encourage self-sacrifice on any terms.
>
> (p. 61)

By using a single standard, Shaw was able to depict his "unwomanly woman" in all classes of society and deal with any social issue he considered of importance.

In his earlier plays, Shaw had women control a man's

world by controlling men. These included Candida, Ann Whitefield in Man and Superman and Lady Cicely Wanyflete in Captain Brassbound's Conversion. In later plays, he portrayed strong and masterful women who acted directly upon the world. The epitome of his unwomanly woman is found in the character of Saint Joan (1923) created when many of the social and political concerns that had occupied his attention were no longer vital issues. The end of the First World War resulted in changes and reforms of various kinds and with the exception of Back to Methuselah, written between 1918 and 1921, many considered his playwrighting career at an end. As usual, Shaw surprised everyone by creating what is generally considered his masterpiece, Saint Joan. Analysis of the play is unimportant to this thesis since it takes place outside of Shaw's own time, but a brief description of the character of Joan is important. Shaw considered her "the pioneer of rational dressing for women... she refused to accept the specific woman's lot, and dressed and fought and lived as men did" (Shaw, 1965, p. 7). His description of Joan in his preface indicates the high esteem he held for her:

> We may accept and admire Joan... as a sane and shrewd country girl of extraordinary strength of mind and hardihood of body... a woman of policy and not of blind impulse... She was never for a moment what so many romancers and playwrights have pretended: a romantic young lady. She was a thorough daughter of the soil... She had... sense of value of public decency... She talked to and dealt with people of all classes... without embarrassment or affectation... She was very

> capable: a born boss... [The] combination of inept youth and academic ignorance with great natural capacity, push, courage, devotion, originality and oddity, fully accounts for all the facts in Joan's career, and makes her a credible historical and human phenomenon...
>
> (pp. 21-23)

For Shaw, Joan was the embodiment of the New Woman. He compared her to Sylvia Pankhurst who "like so many other women in that movement (the Suffrage Movement) was tortured. In fact, except for burning, she suffered actual physical torture which Joan was spared... If you read Miss Pankhurst, you will understand a great deal more about the psychology of Joan and her position at the trial, than you will by reading the historical accounts, which are very dry" (in Lorichs, 1973, p. 167). His models for Joan were not the heroines of romance, but the militant leaders of the woman's suffrage movement.

One final note about the Shavian heroine. In Shaw's view, the standard for moral judgement was self-respect. Many critics, both past and present, have argued that Shaw's women are unrealistic. On a simplistic level, this observation is valid insofar as they are more articulate and expressive than many real people. However, it is the personification of self-respect or self-love in his heroines that seems so unique when compared with traditional female characters in theatre. From Shaw's perspective, self-respect is the constant in a changing world: "Under the infinitely shifting sands of custom, period, class

and personal preference, self-respect stands like a rock, for it is equally valid in all worlds" (Watson, 1964, p. 139). It is this important characteristic that all of Shaw's heroines have in common, and for women to make decisions about their lives using self-respect as the most important criterion was indeed rare. And, in Shaw's words; "...a thing that nobody believes cannot be proved too often".

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

Although Somerset Maugham is best known for his novels and short stories, he was, in fact, a popular and successful playwright for the first three decades of the 20th century. Unlike Shaw, he was not a thesis playwright; that is, he was not interested in using the stage as a platform for political or social reform. Rather, he was content to observe the upper middle-classes and satirize their weaknesses and vanities as he saw them. By doing so, his dramatic comedies became penetrating social commentaries of his time. Like Pinero and Shaw, Maugham wrote plays which provided good parts for women; however, he "etched his heroines with a sharper and subtler needle" than did Pinero (Curtis, 1974, p. 116). While Shaw's plays were designed to liberate women by giving many of his female characters the qualities of leadership and resourcefulness that were traditionally associated with men, Maugham's women reflected the

reality of the 20th century woman as she moved toward more political and social independence. Because he was acutely sensitive to any prevailing fashion, his plays acted as a barometer of changing attitudes.

Most of Maugham's plays are about the upper middle-class and most of them deal with marriage in some form or other. According to Barnes (1968), Maugham used the marriage contract in his comedies as a common image of society. His intention was to point out and ridicule social ills rather than to correct them and the marriage contract acted as a unifying theme for this purpose. As one follows the development of his plays chronologically, there is a progressive trend toward instability in marriage coupled with less reason to retain stability. His plays reflect the breakdown of traditional Victorian values.

A comparison of Penelope, written in 1908, and The Constant Wife, written in 1926, serves to illustrate the difference in attitude with respect to women and marriage between pre- and post-World War I. When the earlier play opens, Penelope has gathered her mother (an amiable woman with an interest in Church missions), her father (a professor of mathematics), her uncle (a pompous snob), and her solicitor, to announce that she wants to divorce her husband, Dickie, because he is having an affair with her friend, Ada Fergusson. She cannot understand it since she has been a model wife; loving, solicitous, and extremely attentive. Her father remarks dryly

that no man could stand it and that Penelope is to blame because she has been condemning her husband "to an unrelieved diet of strawberry ices". When it is determined that she is still madly in love with Dickie, Professor Golightly advises her that, in order to keep him she must be charming but indifferent to Dickie and take every opportunity to throw her husband "into the lap" of Ada Fergusson. Golightly's rationale is that once the difficulty of conducting the affair is gone, the excitement will quickly disappear, and his mistress will become tedious to him.

In order to carry on his affair with Mrs. Fergusson, Dickie has invented a rich, elderly patient named Mrs. Mack, who is taking up a great deal of his time. While his mistress is using his money for the races, and for covering losses on the Stock Exchange, his wife is using it to buy dresses and hats to console herself during his absences. The mythical Mrs. Mack becomes a very expensive illusion to maintain. Penelope, however, carries on her father's plans with success. As predicted, Mrs. Fergusson soon becomes jealous, demanding, and too expensive to afford, and Dickie longs to escape back to his wife who has retained, at great difficulty, a facade of charm and indifference toward him. Finally, Penelope can no longer hide her knowledge of the affair, and, bursting into peals of laughter, informs Dickie that she has known all along. He is distressed at having been found out but even more so at her

apparent calm acceptance of the whole thing:

DICKIE: Aren't you jealous?

PENELOPE: Jealous? You must think me a little donkey.

DICKIE: You took it as a matter of course? It amused you? It was as good as a play?

PENELOPE: Darling, we've been married for five years. It's absurd to think there could be anything between us after all that time.

DICKIE: Oh, is it? I wasn't aware of that fact.

PENELOPE: The whole thing seemed to me of no importance. I was pleased to think you were happy.

DICKIE: (Flying into a passion.) Well, I think it's positively disgraceful, Penelope.

(Vol. I, pp. 71-72)

The third act begins with more friendly advice from Professor Golightly, whose wisdom and insight into relationships have apparently derived from his many years of manipulating numbers. He warns Penelope that unless further action is taken on her part, her husband will continue to turn to other women. To keep him from having affairs with a half a dozen women, she must be half a dozen women herself so that Dickie is never quite sure of her:

GOLIGHTLY: Remember that man is by nature a hunter. But how the dickens can he pursue if you're always flinging yourself in his arms? Even the barndoor hen gives her lawful mate a run for his money... you made your

> love too cheap my dear. You should have let your husband beg for it... Dole out your riches. Make yourself a fortress that must be freshly stormed each day. Let him never know that he has all your heart.
>
> (p. 82)

Although Penelope does not relish the constant strain that continual deception will undoubtedly require, she decides that in the long run it will be worth the effort:

> PENELOPE: I love him with all my heart, and if I can keep his love everything is worth while... Father...what must I do to make him love me always?
>
> GOLIGHTLY: In two words, lead him a devil of a life.
>
> (p. 84)

During the remainder of the act, Penelope leads Dickie "a devil of a life" until by the final curtain, he is her humble and adoring slave.

Penelope was an immediate success. That it reflected the general attitudes about marriage and morals is best summed up by J. T. Grein in the Sunday Times and Special of January 10, 1909, when he says:

> ...(Maugham) is a worldwise man. He knows men and women physiologically as well as psychologically... He makes women say and do things which elicit a nod of wonderment and assent from the fair sex... For what does Mr. Maugham try to prove in a playful way of Parisian grace and English good-nature? The old axiom, that a normal woman is content with one man, that to her a little flirtation is all the variety she requires, and that the average man is polygamous without necessarily meaning any harm... How Penelope in the game

> of mice and men, proves victorious... I must leave you to judge for yourselves, since all London, married London especially, will rush to see itself in the mirror.
>
> (in Mander and Mitchenson, 1955, p. 69)

The concept of the feminine that Penelope represented is remarkably similar to the contemporary "Fascinating Womanhood" movement that has resulted as a backlash to the feminist movement of the 1960's and 70's. It is entirely the responsibility of the woman to attract and maintain the attraction of the man. If he is unfaithful, that is because it is his nature to be so, but a clever and deceptive woman can keep him from straying. In fact, deceitfulness in marriage appears to be taken for granted as natural (and necessary). As a result of showing her real feelings for her husband, Penelope was in danger of losing him.

In many ways, The Constant Wife is similar to Penelope. As Curtis (1974) notes, The Constant Wife is a restructured and remotivated version of the first play. The similarity between the husbands in the two plays is striking. Both are physicians, each has an affair with a married friend of his wife, each is more upset with his wife's discovery of the affair than his own infidelity and both give up their mistresses when their demands become unbearable. Dickie decides that "philandering with a married woman is the most exaggerated form of amusement that's ever been invented" while John, Constance's husband, declares that extra-marital affairs have "all the inconveniences of

marriage and none of its advantages". In other words, they discover that a mistress is more demanding and confining than a wife.

The Constant Wife, however, reflects Maugham's observations of the emergence of a new role for women. Constance is thirty-six years old, and the mother of one child. She and her husband, John, have been married for fifteen years and continue to delight in each other's company, giving every indication that their marriage is a successful one. When the play opens, her mother, sister, and best friend Barbara are discussing the fact that John is having an affair with Marie-Louise, a married friend of his wife. Constance's mother represents the same view as Penelope's father did eighteen years previously, only now this view is seen as old-fashioned. With respect to a husband's infidelity, Mrs. Culver says:

> I have my own ideas about marriage. If a man neglects his wife it's her own fault, and if he's systematically unfaithful to her in nine cases out of ten she has only herself to blame... No sensible woman attaches importance to an occasional slip.
>
> (Vol. II, p. 112)

The infidelity of a wife is quite a different matter:

> Of course I believe in fidelity for women. I suppose no one has ever questioned the desirability of that. But men are different. Women should remember that they have their homes and their name and position and their family, and they should learn to close their eyes when it's possible they may see something they are not meant to.
>
> (p. 113)

In order to point out the old-fashionedness of Mrs. Culver's views, Maugham introduces a new dimension to the play that was not present in Penelope, in the form of Bernard Kersal, an old suitor of Constance's. Rather than taking the trouble to restore her husband's spirit of romance, Constance decides to have her own affair with Bernard. Where Penelope pretended that after five years of marriage there could be nothing left between she and Dickie, Constance responds honestly:

> For five years we adored each other.
> That's much longer than most people do...
> and then we had a most extraordinary stroke
> of luck: we ceased to be in love with one
> another simultaneously.
>
> (p. 151)

She assures John that she is still devoted to him and that she considers them both bound together by a bond of genuine affection. However, she feels no bitterness or resentment "except perhaps for John's being so stupid as to let himself be found out". In fact, it is Constance who persuades Marie-Louise's jealous and irate husband that the cigarette case found at his wife's bed is hers and not John's.

Before Constance can embark on an affair of her own, she feels a moral obligation to become financially independent of her husband. Her assessment of the economic relationship between husband and wife is Shavian in tone:

> ...have you ever considered what marriage
> is among well-to-do people? In the working
> classes a woman cooks her husband's dinner,
> washes for him and darns his socks. She

> looks after the children and makes their clothes. She gives good value for the money she costs. But what is a wife of our class? Her house is managed by servants, nurses look after her children, if she has resigned herself to having any, and as soon as they are old enough she packs them off to school... When all is said and done, the modern wife is nothing but a parasite.
> (p. 160)

Constance takes a job as an interior decorator with her friend Barbara's company and after a year, makes enough money to give John 1000 pounds for her keep and have 400 left for herself. She then leaves on a six week vacation with Bernard informing John:

> I owe you nothing. I am able to keep myself. For the last year I have paid my way. There is only one freedom that is really important and that is economic freedom, for in the long run, the man who pays the piper calls the tune. Well, I have that freedom and upon my soul it's the most enjoyable sensation I can remember since I ate my first strawberry ice.
> (p. 181)

Although John is initially furious, he ultimately accepts her decision and asks her to return to him after her holiday:

> CONSTANCE: (At the door). Well, then shall I come back?
>
> JOHN: (After a moment's hesitation.) You are the most maddening, wilful, capricious, wrong-headed, delightful and enchanting woman man was ever cursed with having for a wife. Yes, damn you, come back.

As Block (1939) indicates, Maugham demonstrated that the

economic independence of the wife not only causes her own rejection of the double standard of sexual morality, but her freedom forces her husband to reject it as well.

The relationship between women and money had changed significantly between the writing of Penelope and The Constant Wife. Maugham, in Penelope, points out the complete economic dependence of women in the upper middle-class to their husbands and how it is tied to their emotional dependence. Mrs. Fergusson seems more interested in Dickie's money than in Dickie and Penelope's answer for alleviating her loneliness and distress is to buy new clothes. However, the idea of economic independence is never raised as an issue nor is economic dependence questioned. It is simply noted and assumed as a normal state of affairs. The Constant Wife not only questions the financial dependence of wives but provides the answer by advocating that women of Constance's class should work if they wish freedom.

Although divorce is mentioned at the beginning of Penelope, it is quickly disregarded as a solution to the wife's dilemma. Divorce was becoming more common in England in 1908, but it continued to remain sensational and was considered a scandal for those involved. By 1923, however, women were able to sue for divorce on the same grounds as were men, and it is not until the period following the First World War that Constance and other Maugham characters reflect the breaking of the marriage contract by women as a viable course of action.

Summary

An examination of selected works by playwrights from 1890 to 1930 shows a pronounced shift away from the Victorian concept of the feminine toward a new definition of a woman who enjoyed greater freedom and independence. The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893) reflected traditional Victorian ideals of womanhood although its subject matter, the marriage of an ex-prostitute to a gentleman, was considered shocking. Paula represents the fallen woman, a passionate and wilful seductress whose past cannot be escaped despite the fact that she truly wishes to reform. Ellean, her step-daughter, is the ideal of the Victorian young lady, innocent and virtuous, requiring only the love of an acceptable young man to elicit her latent warmth and softness. The play points out the exaggerated value Victorians placed on respectability. Paula can never hope for acceptance and her only recourse is suicide. Once she has died, however, it is possible for Ellean to feel compassion for her. Pinero was not interested in the reasons which led to Paula's life as a courtesan. It was enough that she was one to condemn her to death.

The Shavian heroine stood apart as a unique figure in her time (and indeed, it might be argued, in subsequent times). She was portrayed as radically selfish, but her selfishness was based on honesty and self-respect. She was the aggressor in

sexual relationships but in a tactful and witty way. Unlike many male writers, Shaw did not fear the sexuality of women, but rather considered their sexual aggressiveness as inevitable in the evolutionary process and thus noble in motive. Women, according to Shaw, have as much right to a career as do men. He condemned the sentimental notion of marriage and saw it in reality as economic slavery for the woman: Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893) points out the parallel between marriage and prostitution. Marriage is fine only if it is a voluntary association based on genuine kindness and mutual companionship which override the customs and laws that govern it. In short, Shaw consistently portrayed his "unwomenly women" as intelligent and independent human beings thoughout the 1890's to 1930 and beyond. As shown by the reaction of the critics, it was not until the 1920's that his heroines met with any degree of critical success and even then (as now), opinions on the Shavian woman were decidedly mixed.

Maugham's heroines mirrored the breakdown of traditional Victorian values with respect to women. Penelope (1908) reflects the Edwardian defiance of Victorian attitudes. In order to save her marriage, the heroine displays a great deal of worldly-wise charm which was unthinkable in the ideal Victorian woman. Although divorce is never raised as a serious possibility, Penelope is not obsessed with the importance of respectability. Throughout the play, her motivation is her love

of Dickie and not her concern with appearances. She defies the Victorian conventions about sex by openly acknowledging her feelings of passion for her husband. Although she is far less naive than Ellean, she requires her father's guidance in order to deal effectively with her husband's affair. Nonetheless, once the advice is given, she handles herself with remarkable sophistication and skill. While the Victorian woman is considered the epitome of virtue and innocence, Penelope is charmingly deceitful and manipulative. Constance, in The Constant Wife (1926), represents the emergence of the New Woman of the 1920's. Like the Shavian heroine, she recognized the importance of economic freedom within marriage as well as without. As a result, she embarks on a successful career in interior decorating. Her expectations of marriage are no longer sentimental or romantic but practical and realistic. Divorce is a viable option but unnecessary in her case since she and John enjoy mutual affection and respect. Although adultery is neither shocking nor immoral to Constance, she requires economic independence as a moral prerequisite to an affair since she recognized the parasitic quality of most upper middle-class marriages.

Constance is shown to be intelligent, competent, unsentimental, sexual, and to some extent, economically and emotionally independent. She is both literally and figuratively a New Woman when compared with her Victorian mother. However,

as the title of the play suggests, she remains first and foremost, regardless of changing circumstances, the constant wife.

CHAPTER IV

"It is the woman who has to speak."
Anais Nin

The Feminists

From 1890 until the end of the First World War, most feminists focused their attention on securing the franchise for women and helping in the war effort. The time was a period of action rather than reflection and analysis (see Flexner, 1959; Pankhurst, 1911, 1935; Raeburn, 1973). As a consequence, it is necessary to turn to the works of John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill in order to examine the philosophic roots behind the feminist movement of the 19th century. Once the War was ended and the vote secured, feminists were again free to assess their situation and return to a fuller discussion of other issues.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

From the time of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women until the mid 19th century, feminists shared the conviction that a better society was possible primarily through the use of reason and free enquiry. As a result they stressed the power of thought and education as essential for the elimination of human ignorance and corruption. John Stuart Mill

came from the tradition of liberal and radical thinkers and activists who were aroused by the subjection of any group of people to ruling elites. Raised on the Utilitarian theories of his father James Mill, his first social circle was made up of a diverse group of men and women who referred to themselves as the Philosophical Radicals and who included such women intellectuals as Harriet Grote and Sarah Austin. In 1830, he met Harriet Taylor, a Unitarian Radical, (as was Mary Wollstonecraft), and she became the central figure in Mill's personal and intellectual life. In his autobiography, he acknowledged his debt to Taylor for expanding his views on the position of women beyond an abstract principle. Because of her influence, he developed an understanding of the relationship between the inferior status of women and all other existing evils in society. With respect to Taylor's contribution toward his essay, The Subjection of Women, he states:

> ...all that is most striking and profound belongs to my wife; coming from the fund of thought which had been made common to us both, by our innumerable conversations and discussions on a topic which filled so large a place in our minds.
>
> (in Coss, 1924, p. 186)

The Subjection of Women was written in 1861 and published in 1869. Despite Mill's reputation as a significant figure in the history of ideas, his essay was largely ignored by his male contemporaries as well as future historians. Leaders of the suffrage movement, however, quickly adopted it as a definitive

analysis of the position of women in society. It remains a milestone in feminist literature because its reasoned intellectual analysis is combined with the stamp of deep personal conviction.

In the first section of the essay, Mill argues that people have believed the subjection of women to be both natural and inevitable when, in fact, it is no more than an artifact of the historical subordination of the weaker sex to the stronger. Although the law of the strongest no longer prevails in the most advanced nations, their institutions continue to "place right on the side of might". For those who claim that the domination of men over women is natural, he responds; "But was there ever any domination which did not appear natural to those who possessed it?" (in Rossi, 1971, p. 137). Aristotle assumed the division of mankind into masters and slaves as the only natural condition of the human race, as did the slaveowners of the Southern United States. In fact, what appears as unnatural is, in reality, only uncustomary. He rejects the argument that the rule of men over women is voluntary rather than forceful by pointing out that a great many women do not accept it, and those who do, have been strenuously taught to repress any aspirations for equality: "It must be remembered... that no enslaved class ever asked for complete liberty at once" (p. 140). He points out that in the more civilized countries, the disabilities of women are the only case (with the exception of royalty) "in which the laws and institutions take persons at their birth, and ordain that they

shall never in all their lives be allowed to compete for certain things" (p. 145). Thus the social subordination of women is the single remaining relic of an outmoded law.

Mill exposed the hardships of women under the then existing marriage and property laws (see Chapter 2) which made the married woman "the personal body-servant of a despot" with fewer rights than American slaves. So strongly did Mill believe this that, prior to his marriage to Harriet Taylor, he wrote the following document:

> Being about, if I am so happy as to obtain her consent, to enter into the marriage relation with the only woman I have ever known, with whom I would have entered into that state and the whole character of the marriage relation as constituted by law being such as both she and I entirely and conscientiously disapprove, for this among other reasons, that it confers upon one of the parties to the contract, legal power and control over the person, property, and freedom of action of the other party, independent of her own wishes and will; I, having no means of legally divesting myself of those odious powers (as I most assuredly would do if an engagement to that effect could be made legally binding on me) feel it my duty to put on record a formal protest against the existing law of marriage, in so far as conferring such powers; and a solemn promise never in any case or under any circumstances to use them. And in the event of marriage between Mrs. Taylor and me I declare it to be my will and intention, and the condition of the engagement between us, that she retains in all respects whatever the same absolute freedom of action and freedom of disposal of herself and of all that does or may at any time belong to her, as if no such marriage had taken place; and I absolutely disclaim and repudiate all pretension to have

> acquired any rights whatever by virtue of such marriage.
>
> (J. S. Mill in Rossi, 1971, pp. 45-46)

While he argued for equality of women within the family, Mill believed that once a woman has married, her first priority should be the management of the home and the raising of the children.

A large part of the essay is devoted to dispelling the objection that women are unfit for participation in public society. Suffrage for women is supported under the same conditions that are determined for men, and their right to hold public office or enter professions involving important public responsibilities. With reference to the natural differences between the sexes, Mill argued that while women may have unique attributes, there is no way to determine what they are until women have been given the freedom to develop autonomously. Whatever the present differences between the sexes, it is impossible to authenticate which are natural and which are the result of different external circumstances:

> No one can know the nature of the sexes as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to each other;... what women are is what we have required them to be.
>
> (p. 202)

Furthermore, as long as women are denied the opportunity to testify on their own behalf, nothing will be known:

> ...we may safely assert that the knowledge which men can acquire of women... is wretchedly imperfect and superficial, and always will be so, until women

themselves have told all that they have to tell.
(p. 152)

Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858)

There are two written works by Taylor about women; a short essay composed for Mill and an article in the Westminster Review, July, 1851, entitled "Enfranchisement of Women". Like Wollstonecraft and Mill, Taylor recognized that what were accepted as the inherently different natures of men and women could be attributed as easily to environmental influences and cultural expectations:

> Whether nature made a difference in the nature of men and women or not... it may be only that the habits of freedom and low indulgence on which boys grow up and the contrary notion of what is called purity in girls may have produced different natures in the sexes.
>
> (Taylor in Rossi, 1971, p. 84)

She was also aware of the importance of a full and equitable education for women as was Wollstonecraft. The only education that most women were permitted was in preparation for marriage and even then, they were kept ignorant of their lack of rights within the marriage contract:

> In the present system of habits and opinions, girls enter into what is called a contract perfectly ignorant of the conditions of it, and that they should be so is considered absolutely essential to their fitness of it.
> (p. 86)

For those "moderate reformers of the education of women", she had nothing but contempt. Their purpose was to allow women sufficient education in the arts and sciences to make themselves more interesting and suitable companions for their husbands. For Taylor, the major goal of improved education for women was to prepare them for any occupational field they chose: "High mental powers in women will be but an exceptional accident until every career is open to them and until they as well as men, are educated for themselves and for the world, not one sex for the other" (p. 43). Taylor's views differed significantly from her husband in this area. Mill did not see the necessity for married women to seek employment because he believed that household and child-rearing duties were a sufficient contribution for wives. He also was concerned that their availability for work would flood the labour market and lower wages. Taylor held firmly to her point that all women should be afforded the right to an occupation and that married women were no exception: "...a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family, cannot be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who, however she may toil as a domestic drudge, is dependent on the man for subsistence" (p. 105). A woman with economic independence would be in a position to maintain responsibility for the care of her children if necessary. She would then be forced to carefully consider the number of children she should have, rather than using the addition of them as a means of securing her ties to

the husband who supports them all.

While acknowledging the importance of education for women, Taylor recognized that its acquisition would be a long, slow process. Immediate measures were called for and this required extensive changes in the laws. In the article for the Westminster Review, she both summarizes and endorses the principle demands formulated by the Women's Rights Convention in Massachusetts in 1850:

> 1. Education in primary and high schools, universities, medical, legal, and theological institutions.
>
> 2. Partnership in the labours and gains, risks and renumerations of productive industry.
>
> 3. A co-equal share in the formation and administration of laws - municipal, state and national - through legislative assemblies, courts, and executive offices.
>
> (p. 95)

With respect to marriage, Taylor's views were far more radical than those of her husband. Whereas Mill called for a revision and equalization of the marriage laws, Taylor considered government interference in interpersonal affairs ridiculous: "I should think that 500 years hence none of the follies of their ancestors will so excite wonder and contempt as the fact of legislative restraints... in the expression of feeling" (p. 85). It was her hope that when the whole community was "really educated", no one would marry because it would be unnecessary.

However, as long as relationships were bound in law, she felt that divorce should be obtainable "without any reason assigned, and at small expense".

Taylor shared with Mill a profound belief in a system based on equal justice:

> ...many persons think they have sufficiently justified the restriction on women's field of action, when they have said that the pursuits from which women are excluded are unfeminine, and that the proper sphere of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life. We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their 'proper sphere'. The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to.
>
> (p. 100)

As Rossi (1971) states, the Mills combined a blend of compassion and logic with a commitment to the idea that liberty is unable to exist in the absence of the power to use it. Once that power is attained, men and women will come to a fuller realization of their human potential.

While the writings of Harriet Taylor Mill received little attention, The Subjection of Women was greeted with enthusiasm by both British and American suffragists, and referred to consistently in the ensuing decades. The treatise lent weight to their cause in large part because of its author. Not only was it written by a man, but more important, a man of international reputation and stature. Furthermore, Mill had attempted to turn

his writings into political action when, as an elected member of the House of Commons, he sponsored the first bill to enfranchise English women. However, for the later generation of feminists who were active at the turn of the century, Mill was less of an intellectual hero. In 1847, Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto had provided the principles of scientific socialism and in 1883, the Fabian Society (whose membership was to include George Bernard Shaw), was founded to popularize the socialist cause. The younger, radical women in the Movement were more stimulated by the socialist thinkers of the period than by the writings of Mill. However, the time was primarily one of political activism rather than analysis and this activism continued until the vote was won.

Post-World War One Feminism

During the 1920's (and continuing until the 1960's), feminist literature and visibility diminished substantially. Most historians are in agreement with O'Neill (1969) who considers the women's movement to have essentially ended with the attainment of the vote. In his view, feminists were unable to see that "equal suffrage was almost the only issue holding the disparate elements of the woman movement together" with the result that once they were enfranchised, their status as a bloc disintegrated. Suffrage had provided the symbol which united

women and once the vote was won, the symbol was lost and feminism died. Rossi (1973), however, provides a different explanation for the hiatus. She argues that what ended were the public roles of women: "...the generation that followed the activist generation of suffragists may have been consolidating feminist ideas into the private stuff of their lives and seeking new outlets for the expression of the values that prompted their mothers' behavior" (p. 616). Since historians tend to focus on the public roles of men and women, they are less likely, in her view, to perceive the private continuity which exists between generations.

What is clear is that by the turn of the century, feminist goals had changed significantly from those held by the early feminists. Attainment of the vote rather than the radical revision of social and economic relationships had become the central issue and emphasis was placed on the ballot as the prime agent for reforming society. Suffragists began to stress the differences between men and women arguing that women had unique skills to deal with human problems based on their experiences as wives and mothers:

> ...the woman's movement more and more frequently accepted the opposition's premise on the sanctity of the home and pursued the fight for the vote within the context of conventional ideas on woman's place... In the past feminist leaders had championed the principle that the two sexes had exactly identical rights to engage in worldly activity. Now, they frequently argued that women deserved

> the vote precisely because they were different.
> (Chafe, 1972, p. 13)

The nation became a macrocosm of the home and once more the role of woman as special protector of morals and preserver of home and family was emphasized but now by many of the suffragists. Much of this line of reasoning was an attempt on the part of women leaders to neutralize a hostile political environment which equated feminist demands with the breakdown of the traditional family and traditional values (as, indeed, it originally did). As a result, by the time women acquired the vote, the feminist movement had acquired a large degree of middle-class respectability.

To further complicate the woman question, a revolution in sexual morals was occurring in post-war Britain and America. The 1920's is symbolized by the 'flapper' who defied convention and rejected the Victorian ideal of femininity. According to Chafe (1972), books, pamphlets, articles, and popular discussions on sexual matters reached an unprecedented level and the new morality consisted of action as well as talk. Both Terman (1938) and Kinsey (1953) found that women born after the turn of the century were twice as likely to have experienced premarital sex as those born before 1900 and the critical change occurred with women who reached sexual maturity in the late 1910's and early 1920's. Yet emancipation as symbolized by the 'flapper' was only tenuously connected with the women's movement. Most veterans of the suffrage struggle disapproved of the new morality while many

ardent advocates of sexual liberation such as Ellen Key, rejected feminist goals.

Margaret Sanger (1879-1966)

An interesting case in point is Margaret Sanger, who stressed the right of women to control their own bodies but also advocated that they develop their own sphere and become as distinctly 'feminine' as possible. Sanger, an American, focused her activities and, indeed, dedicated her life to the birth control movement. Although she was by no means a pioneer in the field, (Annie Besant had been prosecuted in England in 1877 for republishing a book which advocated family planning), she was, without question, the most prominent figure in the American birth control movement. Her interest in contraception originated with her work as a nurse where she came into contact with working women suffering the physical and economic problems associated with large families and illegal abortions. She was imprisoned for opening a birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916 and in 1921, became president of the American Birth Control League (Rover, 1970).

In 1920, Sanger published Woman and the New Race. In her book she points out that despite suffrage and equitable laws regarding work and property, women will continue to have an inferior status in society until they gain the freedom to control

their own bodies. In her view, woman is responsible for perpetuating "the tyrannies of the Earth" by endless unenlightened and submissive maternity which made the value of life cheap. Over-population resulted in wars, famine, plagues and slums, and produced unwanted, defective and ignorant human beings. Drawing attention to high mortality rates owing to continued pregnancies and abortions, she argued that voluntary motherhood would alleviate all these societal ills and allow women the necessary freedom for their own development as individuals.

In a chapter entitled "Birth Control - A Parent's Problem or Woman's?", she discusses the question of whether the decision should be shared with men or left entirely in the hands of women. While agreeing that in an ideal society, birth control would become the concern of both parents, given existing conditions, the woman herself must have the right to make the choice. It is she who bears the child and runs the risk of death and neither the state nor man should be permitted to coerce her into a decision:

> Woman must have her freedom - the fundamental freedom of choosing whether or not she shall be a mother and how many children she will have. Regardless of what man's attitude may be, that problem is hers - and before it can be his, it is hers alone.
>
> (p. 100)

Sanger argues against continence as a means of birth control on the grounds that it is unhealthy for most people. Even those women who practiced 'self-control' by engaging in

only one act of sexual intercourse per year could theoretically bear from eighteen to twenty-four children during their reproductive lifetime, providing they survived. Sanger recognises many women's feeling of "loathing, disgust or indifference" to a sexual relationship but sees it as a result of the teachings of the Christian church, the fear of pregnancy and the insensitive husband who satisfies his own needs without concerning himself with those of his wife:

> Sex morals for women have been one-sided; they have been purely negative, inhibitory and repressive. They have been fixed by agencies which have sought to keep women enslaved; which have been determined... to use woman solely as an asset to the church, the state and the man.
>
> (p. 179)

What is required, in her view, is woman's total knowledge of her own sexual nature. This includes an understanding and awareness of her body, exclusive control of it, and knowledge and access to safe and effective birth control methods. In this way, the "feminine spirit", to which Sanger makes continued reference, will blossom. Unfortunately, her concept of the feminine spirit is never clearly defined. While it most frequently manifests itself in motherhood, she sees it as something greater; the driving force behind woman's continual struggle for emancipation and aspiration toward freedom. When it is interfered with, it becomes destructive but, given free play, it would assert itself in beneficial ways. Sanger does make a

point to distinguish it from the masculine spirit:

> Women are too much inclined to follow in the footsteps of men, to try to think as men think, to try to solve the general problems of life as men solve them. If after attaining their freedom, women accept conditions in the spheres of government, industry, art, morals and religion as they find them, they will be but taking a leaf out of man's book. The woman is not needed to do man's work. She is not needed to think man's thoughts ...Her mission is not to enhance the masculine spirit, but to express the feminine: her's is not to preserve a man-made world, but to create a human world by the infusion of the feminine element into all of its activities.
>
> (pp. 98-99)

The implication is that since the feminine is different from the masculine, women should concentrate on developing their own sphere of life (although what this sphere of life specifically encompasses beyond motherhood, she does not make clear). Thus, while advocating the right of women to control their own bodies, Sanger was unable to acknowledge the necessity or even the importance for women to become involved in the political and economic institutions that governed them.

Suzanne La Follette (b. 1893)

Unlike Sanger, Suzanne La Follette understood fully that sexual freedom did not necessarily alter the basic distribution of roles between men and women. Her book, entitled Concerning Women, was published in 1926, at a time when there was no longer

much public concern for the women's movement and thus it received little attention. Yet she is described by O'Neill (1969) as the most original feminist writer of the 1920's and Rossi (1973) considers her book the best example of radical libertarianism from a feminist perspective.

La Follette begins her book by relating the inferior status of women to the economic system which has treated them as property. The institution of marriage is the principal method by which this is accomplished. Not only does she attack marriage as an institution but she also challenges the belief held by a great many feminists of her day, that emancipation is necessary for improved motherhood. Like Harriet Taylor, she espouses that liberty is its own justification. Marriage, in her terms, is a "natural habit"; that is, the relationship proceeding the instinct for male and female to mate and remain together until after the birth of the offspring. Society, however, has converted this natural habit into a civil and religious institution, which exercises supervision over the sexual, economic, and moral relationship of the two people involved. Yet nowhere are they concerned with the "spiritual" or human aspect of the relationship. Legal grounds for divorce are based on a specific grievance of one party against the other, having physical or economic consequences. The quality of the human relationship is irrelevant. In her view, however, true marriage is based on union by affection, not union by law, and its regulation should

be left to the two people concerned.

La Follette argues against the traditional assumption that marriage and motherhood are the special province of women and that women exist for the sake of the species. Biologically, both male and female are necessary for the propagation of offspring and the unfitness or disability in a father also may have a harmful effect on the child. In fact, motherhood per se is accorded no respect whatsoever as evidenced by the attitude toward an unmarried mother and the child she bears:

> When... (motherhood) results from a sexual relationship which has been duly sanctioned by organized society, it is holy, no matter how it may transgress the rules of decency, health, or common sense. Otherwise it is a sin meriting social ostracism for the mother and obloquy for the child - an ostracism and an obloquy, significantly enough, in which the father does not share.
>
> (La Follette, 1926, p. 96)

While acknowledging that the motives behind the condemnation of extra-legal motherhood are various and complex, she believes that in large part they are the result of defiance of male proprietorship. Pregnancy out of wedlock implies sexual freedom for the female which would threaten the dominance of the male in sexual matters, "a dominance which has been enforced by imposing all manner of unnatural social and legal disabilities upon women, such... as the demand for virginity before marriage and chastity after it" (p. 97). Women continue to marry because in part, it offers them the privilege of exemption from the social and

economic consequences of illegitimate motherhood.

La Follette also deals with the feminine stereotype. She points out the "extraordinary inconsistencies in the current estimate of female character", including the estimate of scientists. Women are believed to be more gentle and tender than men and yet they are also supposed to be more vengeful: "Hell hath no fury..." They are supposed to be impulsive and sentimental and yet are considered calculating, especially in their relationships with men. The ideal woman, as seen by experts, "is something of a cross between an imbecile and a saint" (p. 54). In her opinion, the result of these generalities and superstitions culminate in the notion of woman as function rather than woman as person.

She believes that the early feminists erred by placing so much weight on the importance of legal and political rights at a time when "no legal guarantee of rights is worth the paper it is written on". Her view is that the core of the problem is an inequitable economic system which affects both sexes: "...even if we assume that the establishment of legal equality between the sexes would result in complete social and economic equality, we are obliged to face the fact that under such a regime women would enjoy precisely that degree of freedom which men now enjoy - that is to say, very little" (p. 266). The Marxist solution to transfer private property to the state is unacceptable, in her view, since it would simply create another and larger monopoly. Real freedom

requires the disappearance of economic advantage rather than shifting of power from one group to another. While her specific solutions for the elimination of economic injustice are not important to this thesis, her envisioned results are worth noting. She felt that in a free society:

> ...those artificial differentiations between the sexes which have been built up by superstitions, and by masculine dominance, would tend to disappear. Women would no longer be regarded as extra-human beings endowed with superhuman powers for good or ill; they would no longer be regarded exclusively or chiefly as a function... and as freedom promoted individuals among women, it would become evident that the traditional notions concerning the feminine nature were drawn from qualities which, having been bred by their subjection, should have been regarded as characteristics not of a sex but of a class.
>
> (p. 258)

La Follette's book is of particular importance because, unlike many of her contemporaries, she had freed herself from the conventional wisdom of the movement and provided a point of departure from which women could rethink their position. However, the attainment of the franchise had resulted in a loss of momentum in the various women's organizations and, as a result, her writings went largely unnoticed by feminists as well as the public at large.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

One further writer requires discussion although she probably would not have considered the label of 'feminist' as applying to herself. Perhaps Virginia Woolf is the last writer prior to the 1960's whose work contains 'a touch of the old feminism' in that it carried an implicit demand for future change in the lives of women (Rossi, 1973). Although she had only limited direct contact with the political aspects of feminism, many of her friends were actively involved in the women's movement and there is no doubt that she was in sympathy with a large number of their aims (see Bell, 1972). She wrote two major essays specifically related to the position of women in society, although it is important to stress that her intended audience was limited in that it appealed primarily to middle-class women particularly concerned with intellectual and professional pursuits. Her contribution to feminist literature stems, not from political analysis, but from the unique skills of a gifted artist noted for her acutely sensitive perceptions of the world around her. She was profoundly aware of the day-to-day discriminations and humiliations foisted on intelligent and talented women like herself simply because of their sex. Of equal importance is the manner in which Woolf conveys the 'thousands of small ways' women are made to feel unwelcome in a man's world. Discussing her prose style in general, a reviewer for the Spectator states:

> Only can Virginia Woolf convey with extra-ordinary intensity a particular act of sensual perception: she is also one of the very rare prose writers whose general statements immediately and intensely recreate in the mind of the reader the feeling stated.
>
> (in Woolf, 1970, back cover)

Nowhere is this attribute more apparent than in her writings about women. As she describes each situation, whether real or imagined, the reader experiences a shock of recognition, accompanied by a sense of relief or delight in the awareness that the feelings expressed are not unique, but are part of a shared female experience. In this sense, as Rossi (1973) perceptively notes, the writing style of Virginia Woolf is a precursor to the 'consciousness-raising' movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

A Room of One's Own, the most famous of her two essays on women, was based on papers read at Newham and Girton in October, 1928, which were altered and expanded into book form. The second, Three Guineas, was published in 1938 and was originally intended to be a sequel to the first book. While Three Guineas deals more generally with the social and economic roles of "the daughters of educated men", A Room of One's Own is primarily concerned with the problems facing women writers. The major point is stated at the outset: "...a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction..." (p. 6). The remainder of the book is a brilliant personal account of her arrival at

such a position.

Woolf begins her research on the topic of Women and Fiction at the Reading Room of the British Museum:

> If truth is not to be found on the shelves of the British Museum, where, I asked myself, picking up a notebook and a pencil, is truth?
>
> (p. 27)

Her astonished description of the vast numbers of books about women written by men, many of whom "have no apparent qualification save that they are not women" strikes a responsive chord for any contemporary researcher of women's studies. Although she learns nothing about 'Women and Fiction', she does become aware that most of these male experts were angry with women and much of their 'expertise' reflects this anger. According to Woolf:

> Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size... it serves to explain how restless [men] are under her criticism; how impossible it is for her to say to them this book is bad, this picture is feeble, of whatever it may be, without giving far more pain and rousing far more anger than a man would do who gave the same criticism. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished.
>
> (p. 37)

As a result, when men do the observing and writing, there is a distortion in the view of women. This bias is also reflected in the discrimination women are forced to suffer if they attempt to take their place beside men in the world of letters. Libraries,

eating clubs and universities preserved the notion of institutions as male bastions and women were treated like intruders if they attempted entrance.

In answer to the "perennial puzzle" of why there were no women writers during the Elizabethan Age, Woolf fantasized Judith, a sister of Shakespeare, who is equally as gifted as her brother. By exposing the social and economic conditions of the time she illustrates how Judith's talent for writing would be rendered "twisted and deformed" at best, if, indeed, the young woman were able to survive at all. By the end of the eighteenth century, middle-class women began to write and have continued to do so, but their writings still reflect a distortion. Woolf points out that much of the literature written by women is marred by the anger they feel because of their continued lack of freedom. This anger interferes with the imagination and, as a result, artistic insight becomes confused. In the same way that many women become bored with male writers who betray an over-preoccupation with themselves and their own sense of superiority, women writers often falter because of a preoccupation with resentment of injustices done to them because of their sex. For Woolf, good literature requires an author capable of a comprehensive sympathy which understands and transcends the feelings of both sexes. The artist, to be fully successful, must be mentally androgynous.

Good literature also requires intellectual freedom and

intellectual freedom requires economic independence, autonomy and an opportunity for solitude in order to think and write. However, women have had "less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves":

> I told you... that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young - alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop. Opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the cross-roads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed.
>
> (pp. 111-112)

Thus her emphasis on money and a room of one's own, for without them, women will never take their proper place amongst the great writers of fiction.

In Three Guineas, Woolf continues her discussion to include all "daughters of educated men" and not simply those who wish to pursue a career in writing. She has received three separate requests for a guinea; one from a gentleman soliciting funds to help prevent war and protect "culture and intellectual liberty", another for a women's college building fund, and a third for a society promoting the employment of professional women. Through the use of historical documentation, statistics, observation and logic, she is able to show how the three requests are inseparable and that as long as women are oppressed, cultural and intellectual liberty do not exist. The mood of the essay is

far less 'playful' than A Room of One's Own and the tone, more strident. Many women wrote to indicate their approval at the time of its publication, but her close friends were either silent or critical (Bell, 1972). There is some question as to her state of mind when she wrote the book (Woolf was subject to periods of intense depression throughout her life), but what seems to have upset her friends most was her attempt to integrate the question of women's rights with the topic of war when war appeared imminent and fears were high. In Bell's opinion; "The connection between the two questions seemed tenuous and the positive suggestions wholly inadequate" (p. 205). To many, however, the essay stands as a persuasive argument exposing the hypocrisy of a patriarchal society which demands support from its women to protect and defend the very rights it will not permit them to exercise.

Summary

An examination of selected writings by feminists from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1930's indicates that, despite the breakdown of the Victorian stereotype of femininity, issues central to an analysis of the devaluation of the feminine remained unresolved. The first generation of feminists had focused on equality of legal, educational and economic rights for women with suffrage only one of many goals to be attained. By the turn

of the century, however, the emphasis had shifted to one of almost exclusive concern with the winning of the vote for women. In retrospect, it is clear that the power of the ballot was seriously over-estimated by the suffragists. Furthermore, Suzanne La Follette, one of the few feminists in the 1920's to free herself from the conventional wisdom of the movement, expressed concerns and raised issues which were strikingly similar to those voiced by Harriet Taylor one hundred years earlier.

Taylor, writing in 1832, and La Follette and Virginia Woolf, writing in the late 1920's, all recognized the necessity of economic independence for women as essential to their liberation. The fact that La Follette and Woolf placed major emphasis on this point supports the view that the years after 1920 did not represent a time of economic emancipation for women as is popularly believed. In an extensive study of the changing social, political and economic roles for women from 1920 to 1970, Chafe (1972) illustrates that their perceptions were accurate. In his view there was a profound gap between the reality of women's economic situation and the public discourse about it:

> Some shifts had taken place, and the woman of 1928 undoubtedly felt more freedom than her counterpart of a generation earlier. But the changes, for the most part, were of degree rather than kind. Most female workers were poorly paid, most were denied the opportunity to participate in occupations

> not already defined as 'women's work', and most were treated as 'temporary' employees, even in business and the professions.
> (p. 65)

While John Stuart Mill supported equality of women with men, he believed that a woman's primary vocation, should she choose to marry, was the bearing and raising of children and management of the home. Although Taylor disagreed with this view, it was still the position widely held not only by the general public but also by a large number of suffragists and proponents of sexual liberation in the 1920's. Furthermore, the proponderance of evidence suggests that the roles of marriage and a career were considered irreconcilable and many middle-class women were faced with the dilemma of choosing one or the other:

> Only 12.2 per cent of all professional women [in the United States] were married in 1920, and 75 per cent of the women who earned Ph.D.'s between 1877 and 1924 remained spinsters. Many employers refused even to consider hiring married women because of their preoccupation with the home.
> (Chafe, 1972, p. 100)

By the late 1920's, a tolerant attitude toward career women had changed to one of explicit disapproval and those women who did opt for a career rather than marriage faced the stigma attached to such a choice. They were portrayed as unattractive, unfeeling and unfulfilled; in short, as 'unfeminine' females.

Although there is little doubt that the 1920's was characterized by a liberalization of sexual mores, proponents of sexual freedom were either unconcerned about or hostile to

concomitant political and economic freedoms for women. While women were encouraged by people such as Margaret Sanger to experience greater sexual enjoyment and exercise control of their own bodies (made possible by safe and uncomplicated methods of birth control), they were expected to do so within the traditional context of wife and mother. As O'Neill (1969) states: "...it became possible in the 1920's to simultaneously take a radical stand on sex and a conservative one on women's social role" (p. 312). An increase in sexual freedom did not necessarily lead, then, to an alteration of the existing role distributions of men and women.

Pressure to send women back to the home was also evident in the field of education. Curriculum began to reflect the growing concern with the preoccupation of women as homemakers and mothers. New areas of study emerged such as domestic science, hygiene, and eugenics, as if for the specific purpose of preparing women for their 'chief vocation' as homemakers. The change in curriculum was accompanied by a change in attitude of female college students:

> Among Vassar women who graduated prior to 1912, the desire for a career represented one of the most frequently cited reasons for having chosen a Vassar education. Alumnae of the post-World War I period, in contrast, stated over and over again that they had selected Vassar because of its popularity, or because their friends were going there... A newspaper poll of Vassar women in 1923 revealed that 90 per cent wanted to be married, with only 11 of

> 152 preferring a business or professional position.
>
> (Chafe, 1972, p. 102)

Increasingly, colleges and universities reinforced the image of women as homemakers and mothers; precisely the attitude towards women's education that Harriet Taylor held in such contempt during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Thus, post-war feminism began to succumb to the feminine mystique which prescribed a sexually determined role for all 'normal' women. Women were once again encouraged to accept that their most important contribution to society was as wives and mothers. This view was made more palatable by advocating greater sexuality in women and regarding child-rearing and homemaking as a skilled mixture of exact science and aesthetic inspiration, requiring study at the best women's colleges. But the struggle of one hundred years had done little to change the attitudes and role expectations of society and women continued to be defined in terms of their 'feminine function'.

One final note of interest. La Follette, in 1926, argued against legislative interference in relationships between men and women, stating that the regulation of any relationship should be left to the individuals involved. This position was essentially the same as that presented by Harriet Taylor in 1832. The women's movement had come full circle.

CHAPTER V

"If you want to know more about femininity, inquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information."
Sigmund Freud

The Psychologists

Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939)

Although Havelock Ellis did not expound a theory of the 'psychology of women' as such, his studies in the area of human sexuality are important because they were among the first comprehensive works to systematically explore the characteristics by which men and women differ. Ellis undertook his extensive study because he was convinced that "sex lies at the root of life and we can never learn to reverence life until we know how to understand sex" (Ellis, 1936, p. xxx). During the Victorian era, popular beliefs about sexuality had a vast influence on the cultural and moral attitudes in society but were seldom based on fact:

> It may be safely said that in no other field of human activity is so vast an amount of strenuous didactic morality founded on so slender a basis of facts. In most other departments of life we at least make a pretense of learning before we presume to teach; in the field of sex we content

> ourselves with the smallest and vaguest minimum of information, often ostentatiously second hand, usually unreliable.
>
> (1936, pp. xxxiii - xxxiv)

Ellis had a profound belief in the laws of nature and the application of the scientific method to determine these laws. Strongly influenced by Darwin's findings, he viewed nature as dynamic rather than static, and his aim was to discover trends in biological evolution that were constant enough to warrant predictions. To this end he included in his studies data on animal behaviour, 'primitive' or anthropological research, medical research, psychological research, historical information, and personal observations. He was concerned with the cultural bias and lack of precision which permeated the writing in the area of human sexuality and yet which were accepted as fact:

> ...the best informed and most sagacious clinical observers, when giving an opinion on a very difficult and elusive subject, which they have not studied with any attention and method, are liable to make unguarded assertions; sometimes they also become the victims of pseudo-ethical prejudices, so as to be most easily influenced by that class of cases which happens to fit best with their prepossessions.
>
> (1902, p. 3)

Ellis was particularly aware of the extent to which investigator bias had affected data concerning women. One striking example, which he refers to as "a painful page in scientific annals", was the history of opinion regarding sexual differences in the weight and development of the human brain:

> Until quite recent times it has over and over again been emphatically stated by brain-anatomists that the frontal region is relatively larger in men, the parietal in women. This conclusion is now beginning to be regarded as the reverse of the truth, but we have to recognize that it was inevitable. It was firmly believed that the frontal region is the seat of all highest and most abstract intellectual processes and if on examining a dozen or two brains an anatomist found himself landed in the conclusion that the frontal region is relatively large in women, the probability is that he would feel he had reached a conclusion that was absurd. It may indeed be said that it is only since it has become known that the frontal region is of greater relative extent in the Ape than it is Man, and has no special connection with the higher intellectual processes, that it has become possible to recognize the fact that the region is relatively more extensive in women.
>
> (1934, pp. 38-39)

Ellis noted that women were frequently placed into one of two categories; the 'angelic' (equated with virginal) and the 'diabolic' (equated with sexual). There was a tendency to relegate the 'typical' or 'average' woman within one or the other of these two categories and this influence was "subtly lurking even in the most would-be scientific statements of anthropologists and physicians today" (1902, p. 1). While it had long been assumed that 'good' women did not openly enjoy sex, it was apparently reserved for the 19th century to conclude that women were apt to be congenitally incapable of experiencing sexual satisfaction, a conclusion which Ellis showed as having no scientific basis (Ellis, 1902). His intention was to study the

area of human sexuality in as systematic and unbiased a way as possible to obtain "possession of the actual facts and from the investigation of the facts... ascertain what is normal and what is abnormal from the point of view of physiology and psychology. We want to know what is naturally lawful under the various sexual chances that may befall men, not as a born child of sin, but as a naturally social animal" (1936, p. xxx). With this goal in mind, Ellis published Man and Woman in 1894 and Studies in the Psychology of Sex in 1901 which included extensive data on the differences between men and women.

What is remarkable about the vast accumulation of findings he incorporated into these studies, was the extremely limited agreement between the various investigators with relation to the data. This, coupled with his awareness that "so many of the facts are modifiable under a changing environment", made it difficult to reach specific conclusions with respect to the nature of sexual differences. Nonetheless, he did reach certain general conclusions which he referred to as 'tendencies'.

His first conclusion was that there is less variational tendency in women than in men. Variation, as Ellis used it, was equated with the concept of anomaly; that is, a phenomenon that falls outside the normal range of a distribution curve. Greater physical variation in males results in albinism, colour blindness, congenital defects and muscular abnormalities. Turning to mental variations, he noted that men are more likely to display

the "brilliant and startling phenomena associated with genius" as well as "a greater proportion of worthless or even harmful deviations" such as criminality and imbecility. As a result of their "progressive and divergent energies" men are more likely to wander (in a nomadic sense) and to lead. Since there are few women geniuses or criminals, he concluded that there is "an organic tendency (in females) to stability and conservatism involving a diminished abnormality" (1934, p. 439). This is manifested in their preference for familiar surroundings over new places and their willingness to accept and follow male leadership. The implication is that passivity and responsiveness are biologically based characteristics.

On the basis of collected data Ellis concluded that there is greater rapidity of growth and organic development in women than in men and that this growth arrests earlier in the female than in the male. Woman is biologically nearer to nature and to the 'undeveloped man'. Ellis believed that she retains her youthfulness in order to better understand and care for children. He cited evidence which suggested that "the progress of our race has been a progress in youthfulness". Just as the infant ape more closely resembles the human type than does the adult ape, so does woman, as a result of her biological infantility, represent more closely than man, the human type to which man is approximating. Moving toward senility is a process of degeneration since physiological evolution is in the direction of larger brain to

body size, less muscle, less body hair and a more delicate bone structure. Woman is nearer this infantile type than man and therefore feminization is an advancement of the evolutionary process. Ellis was referring to characteristics of woman's physical constitution and not mental traits, but he saw the influence to which he refers reflected in the culture:

> Throughout the whole course of human civilization we see men following up women and taking up their vocations with more energy, more thoroughness, often more eccentricity. In savagery and barbarism men have been predominantly hunters and fishers in character, while our phase of civilization has been industrial, that is to say, feminine in character, for the industries belonged primitively to women, and they tend to make men like women. Even in recent time, and in reference to many of the details of life, it is possible to see the workings of this feminisation; although, it is scarcely necessary to add, this is but one tendency in our complex modern civilization...
>
> (1934, pp. 454-455)

Affectability is another characteristic which differed between males and females. Ellis used the term as a synonym for "that capability for responding to stimuli". He maintained that women are more affectable or liable to minor oscillations because of their menstrual cycle with its continual change in physiological balance and their special endocrine constitution which causes the vasomotor system to be less stable and more responsive to stimuli. He considered this affectability responsible, in part, for women's tact and their ability to adapt themselves more easily than men to unforseen circumstances. Affectability, also

termed "irritability", "suggestability" or "plasticity", accounted for such varying phenomena in women as greater blushing response than men, greater proclivity to nervous diseases, greater tendency to experience fear, greater exuberance or enjoyment of emotion and a greater degree of self-suppression. This tendency to minor physical and mental oscillations in women is counter-balanced by a greater "disvulnerability" or resistance to more serious disturbances.

Although Ellis acknowledged that studies of intelligence were limited with respect to sex differences, he nonetheless drew certain conclusions about specific cognitive functions or traits. Women were superior in tests requiring attention to details, quick adaptation to rapidly changing stimuli and the ability for swift perception, whereas men had a better grasp of generalities and excelled in tasks requiring a sustained logical and analytic attitude. From this data and his own observations, he concluded:

> Women dislike the essentially intellectual process of analysis; they have the instinctive feeling that analysis may possibly destroy emotional complexes by which they are largely moved and which appeal to them. Women dislike rigid rules and principles, and abstract propositions. They feel they can do the right thing by impulse, without needing to know the rule, and they are restive under the rigid order which a man is inclined to obey upon principle.
>
> (1934, pp. 407-408)

Modesty, according to Ellis is defined as "an almost instinctive fear prompting to concealment and usually centering

around the sexual processes..." (1936, p. 1). Although he acknowledged that the trait is common to both sexes, he considered it "more particularly feminine, so that it may be regarded as the chief secondary sexual characteristic of women on the psychical side" (1936, p. 1). Shame, shyness, bashfulness and timidity are seen as closely aligned emotions which adjoin or overlap modesty, but the 'emotion' of modesty is basic because it has a special connection with the consciousness of sex. It is rooted in the sexual periodicy of the female and serves as either an involuntary expression of the organic fact that she does not wish to engage in coitus or as in invitation to the male. Thus feminine modesty, according to Ellis, is of immense importance in creating masculine passion. Ellis's position rests on historical, anthropological and phylogenetic evidence available at that time which suggested the universality of feminine modesty. However, he recognized that it takes various forms depending on the culture and the period in time considered. He concluded that the more "civilized" the society, the more likely is modesty to be minimized and subordinated. Nonetheless, he considered it fundamental in the 'art of love' and an "inevitable by-product of the naturally aggressive attitude of the male and the naturally defensive attitude of the female in sexual relations" (1936, p. 40).

In many of his writings, Ellis stressed the importance of an open sexuality in women. He believed that the evolution of

society had tended to suppress the erotic aspect of woman's sexual life and as a result sexual activity within marriage had come to be regarded as an exclusively male function. In order to dispel coldness, women required "the insight and skill of the right man". While he endorsed the sexual rights of women, he did so within the context of traditional marriage: "It involves no necessary change in the external order of our marriage system...". In two articles entitled "The Objects of Marriage" and "The Erotic Rights of Women", he stressed the importance of the spiritual union of a couple as a result of their mutual enjoyment of sexuality. However, he was careful to point out that "the primary end of marriage is to beget and bear offspring, and rear them until they are able to take care of themselves".

For Ellis, life was composed of the harmonious union of opposites or opposing forces. His thinking reflects the Hegelian notion of thesis - antithesis - synthesis. Each opposing force such as science and religion, action and contemplation, intellect and emotion, are twin aspects of one essential unity. Life manifests itself in opposing tendencies or dualities and the 'supreme art of living' is this realization and the awareness of an existing harmony. His studies on the differences of men and women clearly reflected this philosophy. Human-kind represents the whole and the sexes are complementary opposites which together form the unity. One sex is always defined in relation to the other manifesting his view of the existing tensions between two

opposing principles. Even within each sex, every inaptitude is accompanied by some compensatory attitude. As Klein (1971) observes: "(The) conception of 'compensatory unlikeness' is the basic idea and the ever recurring leit-motiv of Havelock Ellis's considerations. In reading his study... one comes to imagine him as a sort of Justitia, holding a balance, and for every weight put on one scale producing, with an ever ready '...but...', a counterpoise on the opposite scale" (p. 46).

Ellis's views were based on his notion of the laws of nature as supreme. All behaviour is founded on the physical facts of the human organism and the bipolarity of the sexes is reflected in their mental life. He considered activity as masculine and passivity as feminine in an organic sense (unlike Freud who recognized the terms as primarily conventional and not traits exclusive to one sex or the other). Ellis classified types of sexuality on the assumption that there was one essence which could be channelled off into other branches. As Mitchell (1974) states:

> This implied a number of things: a certain fixed, static quality to sexuality, an alternate either/or to the various modes available, normality versus abnormality, and adult sexuality alone.
>
> (p. 16)

The fact that Ellis discussed sexuality at all represents his own progressive attitude at a time when the topic was considered taboo by conventional society.

One is constantly aware of Ellis's blend of optimism and strong sense of justice in his writings. His genuine desire to be fair to women reflects a compensation for those traditionalists who upheld the superiority of the male, a point of view that he clearly found repugnant. Although women were the polar opposite of men in nature, they were entitled to equal consideration since humanity could neither exist nor advance without the equilibrium of both poles. His studies reflected the progressive idea (for his time) of women as equal partners. However, despite the fact that almost all the feminine characteristics that Ellis described can be easily explained in social and/or cultural terms, he persisted in regarding them as organic. With reference to his own life, he comments: "The weaknesses and defects were overcome, not by any effort of masculine protest to create artificially what was not there, but by accepting the facts of constitution and temperament as they come from Nature and making of them an act by which failure could be woven into success" (1940, p. 524).

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

It is widely acknowledged that the ideas of Freud have had a profound impact on 20th century thought and action, and his theory of femininity is no exception. Of significance with respect to his thoughts on female development was his willingness to modify his position in light of new evidence and his own

admission that he considered his views both incomplete and fragmentary. Nonetheless his work, often misrepresented, has both directly and indirectly affected the lives of millions of women.

Biological science had made vast progress since Darwin and during the later 19th century there was a decided shift away from the notion of man as tabula rasa toward the belief that constitutional factors were the major determinants of behavior. As Mitchell (1974) states, nothing would have pleased Freud more than to find a satisfactory biological base on which to rest his psychological theories, but he took great pains to separate the two. For example, when he referred to "instinct", he meant "the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation..." (Freud, 1972, p. 60, my italics). He made the same point with respect to repression:

> Fliess was inclined to regard the antithesis between the sexes as the true cause and primal motive force of repression. I am only repeating what I said then in disagreeing with his view, when I decline to sexualize repression in this way - that is, to explain it on biological grounds instead of on purely psychological ones.
>
> (Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable", Vol. XXIII, 1937, p. 251)

Thus, while he considered biology the 'bedrock' on which his investigations rested, Freud made a clear distinction between it and the mental life: "...psychoanalysis has nothing to do with biology - except in the sense that our mental life also reflects,

in a transformed way, what culture has already done with our biological needs and constitutions. It was with this transformation that Freud was concerned" (Mitchell, 1974, p. 401).

Although Freud's theory of female development went through a number of modifications, attention will be paid to his later works on the subject. It was his belief that boys and girls pass through the early phases of libidinal development in the same manner, and any sexual differences which may exist are outweighed by individual variations: "We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man" (Freud, 1973, p. 151). During this time the most significant relationship for all children is with the mother or mother-figure. Since it is she who feeds and cares for the needs of the infant, arousing a number of pleasant and unpleasant sensations, she is "established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love-object and as the prototype of all later love-relations - for both sexes" (Freud, "An Outline of Psycho-analysis", Vol. XXIII, 1938 [1940], p. 188). A child's first erotic object is the mother's breast and love has its origin in the satisfied need for nourishment.

The onset of the Oedipus complex marks the first time the difference between the sexes finds psychological expression. Unlike the boy, a girl is required to change both her previous erotogenic zone (from clitoris to vagina) and her love object (from mother to father) in the course of 'normal' development. For both boys and girls, an ambivalence toward the maternal

figure emerges, based on frustrations and disappointments accumulated through the early years. None of these experiences alienates the boy from his mother as love-object and yet girls are required to terminate their attachment to her. What makes this possible is the girl's recognition that she has no penis. Her reaction is to envy the boy's possession of one and this envy is crucial to her whole future development. Initially she regards her lack of penis as an individual misfortune but gradually becomes aware that all females, including her mother, are 'castrated'. She blames her mother for her 'disadvantage' and turns from her in hostility. The point Freud is making is not that girls are deficient because they have no penis but rather that they perceive themselves as deficient. He is describing a psychological state based on the recognition of anatomical differences and reinforced by cultural attitudes.

After her recognition of castration, there are three lines of development possible for the girl. The path to 'normal' womanhood requires her to transfer her sexual drive from her mother to her father and ultimately to a wish for his baby. This necessitates the abandonment of active aims in her sexual drive (equated with the clitoris) and the exploitation of her "passive instinctual impulses" (associated with the vagina). As girls enter the phallic phase, the clitoris is the leading erotogenic zone but with the change to femininity "the clitoris should wholly or in part hand over its sensitivity, and at the same

time its importance, to the vagina" (Freud, 1973, pp. 151-152). In other words, psychological and physical acknowledgement of the vagina is required of the young girl. While the clitoris can play a preparatory role in sexual intercourse, if a woman focuses all her sexual interest there, she will have no wish for penal penetration and thus deviate from the norm.

Two other possibilities exist for her, both of which are viewed as 'abnormal'. In the first instance the girl loses her enjoyment of her phallic sexuality when she discovers her castration. In consequence she renounces her masturbatory satisfaction with her clitoris, and repudiates her love for her mother. At the same time she represses a major part of her sexual trends which result in sexual inhibition and neurosis. Freud acknowledged the effect of cultural mores on the sexuality of females. He believed that many functional disturbances in women, including frigidity, were provoked by premarital abstinence and tyrannical cultural standards:

> Modern education assumes in great earnest the task of repressing a girl's sensuality until the time when she marries, and it often resorts to the severest means. Not only does it place an absolute ban upon sexual intercourse and offer many inducements to the female who retains her sexual innocence but it also protects the female against temptation by keeping her in ignorance of the details of her future vocation and removes all the sexual stimuli which do not lead to marriage.
>
> (1931, pp. 35-36)

In the second instance the girl refuses to recognize her

discovery of castration and rebels. If her psychological wish to grow into a boy persists, she will exhibit "markedly masculine traits in the conduct of her later life... (and) in extreme cases... will end as a manifest homosexual" (Freud, "An Outline of Psycho-analysis", Vol. XXIII, 1938 [1940], p. 193). The denial of femininity is referred to as a masculinity complex.

The concept of bisexuality is important to an understanding of Freud's theories. He considered psychological bisexuality a reflection of the biological fact of the "duality of the sexes". It was his belief that no individual is limited to the modes of reaction of a single sex but rather, that psychological aspects of both sexes exist in everyone. He recognized the difficulty with the concepts of masculine/feminine and active/passive when trying to explain his position:

> It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine' whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in science. It is possible to distinguish at least three uses. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological, and sometimes, again, in a sociological sense. <u>The first of these three meanings is the essential one and the most serviceable in psychoanalysis</u>. When, for instance, libido was described... as being 'masculine', the word was being used in this sense, for an instinct is always active even when it has a passive aim in view. The second, or biological, meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is the one whose applicability can be determined most easily. Here 'masculine' and 'feminine' are characterized by the presence of

> spermatozoa or ova respectively and by the functions proceeding from them. Activity and its concomitant phenomena (more powerful muscular development, aggressiveness, greater intensity of libido) are as a rule linked with biological masculinity; but they are not necessarily so, for there are animal species in which these qualities are on the contrary assigned to the female. The third, or sociological, meaning receives its connotation from the observation of actually existing masculine and feminine individuals. Such observation shows that in human beings pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones.
>
> (Freud, 1972, pp. 121-122, footnote, my italics).

In a later lecture on femininity he again returns to a discussion of the concepts:

> We are accustomed to employ 'masculine' and 'feminine' as mental qualities... Thus we speak of a person, whether male or female, as behaving in a masculine way in one connection and in a feminine way in another. But you will soon perceive that this is only giving way to anatomy or to convention... The distinction is not a psychological one; when you say 'masculine', you usually mean 'active', and when you say 'feminine', you usually mean 'passive'... Even in the sphere of human sexual life you soon see how inadequate it is to make masculine behaviour coincide with activity and feminine with passivity... Women can display great activity in various directions, men are not able to live in company with their own kind unless they develop a large amount of passive adaptability.
>
> (Freud, 1973, p. 147)

Penis envy is at the root of a variety of attributes

associated with the feminine. Included are inferiority feelings, narcissism, modesty, jealousy and a limited sense of justice. What most particularly characterizes femininity is a preference for passive aims and behaviour. Once a girl recognizes her lack of penis, she must enter her Oedipal desire for her father by devoting her sexual drive to the passive aim of being loved. While sexual function is in part responsible, he felt that "we must beware in... underestimating the influence of social customs, which similarly force women into passive situations" (1973, p. 149). Closely related are masochistic impulses resulting from the suppression of women's aggressiveness which "succeed... in binding erotically the destructive trends which have been diverted inwards" (ibid., p. 149). Masochism typifies the feminine predicament by turning the wish for the satisfaction of a drive against the self. Again, Freud acknowledged the importance of social as well as constitutional factors which contributed to this characteristic in women. Other traits associated with the feminine include vanity, which indicates the narcissistic wish to be loved rather than to love; jealousy, which results from penis envy, a weaker superego resulting in a limited sense of justice, less capacity for sublimation and weaker social interests. While each of these attributes is possible in both sexes and all of them are influenced by social conditions, they nonetheless represent the marks of womanhood, are most often manifested in women and are always associated with the feminine.

As Mitchell (1974) points out, none of Freud's theories of the psychological differences between the sexes make sense when separated from his concepts of the unconscious and infantile sexuality. During his studies with hysterics, Freud realized that bodily symptoms such as paralysis were often physical expressions of mental thoughts. As a consequence he began to pay close attention to what his patients were saying. A large number of women hysterics claimed to have been seduced by their fathers during childhood. In time, he realized that the seductions were fantasies and that no actual childhood incest had occurred. This led to the notion of unconscious fantasies which in turn led to the notion of unconscious desires. Freud concluded that when the desires of a child seek satisfaction in socially forbidden ways, (that is, in ways unacceptable to consciousness), they are repressed into the unconscious where they remain or where they may emerge and be expressed in either acceptable or symptomatic ways. Of importance, is the recognition that the desires are transformed into laws and language which are different from conscious thought processes. As Freud states: "...one must never allow oneself to be misled into applying the standards of reality to repressed psychical structures" ("Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning", 1911, Vol. XII, p. 225). To criticize his work on the grounds that it does not apply the standards of reality to women's condition is to deny the unconscious. He was interested in the nature of femininity as it is lived in the mind.

With respect to sexuality, Freud argued that a baby is born into full sexuality which is a complex unit existing within the context of human culture. Sexologists such as Havelock Ellis assumed that there was one large source of sexuality which could be channelled off in different directions. Freud assumed the reverse. In Mitchell's terms: "He realized that instead of a pool from which tributaries ran, the tributaries were needed in the first place to form the pool... in childhood all is diverse or perverse, unification and 'normality' are the effort we must make on our entry into human society" (p. 17). Sexual drive or libido is considered active or 'masculine' (and not equated with the male of the species as noted earlier). Each drive has a source, aim and object. The source is not the concern of psychoanalysis since it is probably related to a physiological process. The aim of the drive or its satisfaction can be active or passive in that it can express itself in active or passive relationship to another, and the drive itself has no natural object: "It is what is most variable about an instinct and is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible. The object is not necessarily something extraneous: it may equally well be a part of the subject's own body" (Freud, Papers on Metapsychology, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes", 1915, Vol. XIV, pp. 122-123).

Understanding his theories accurately also requires an

awareness of his concept of 'normality'. He considered normality a marker on a continuum and nothing else: "...a normal ego... is, like normality in general, an ideal fiction... Every normal person, in fact, is only normal on the average. His ego approximates to that of the psychotic in some part or other and to a greater or lesser extent" (Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable", Vol. XXIII, 1937, p. 235). Normality corresponds to the norm being discussed and is not meant to be equated with health. This is made absolutely clear in a letter Freud wrote to a woman whose son was a homosexual: "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function..." (Freud, 1961, p. 419). Furthermore, normal life, like neurosis or psychosis, always involves a compromise with reality. The difference between the three is primarily a matter of degree.

Thus Freud clearly intended to describe rather than prescribe theories of sexuality. It was left to the popularisers of psychoanalysis to proselytize his theories as prescriptions for normal female development. Unlike Ellis, he argued against a theory of symmetry between the sexes, since both males and females initially strive for active masculinity, but in the woman, this striving must be massively repressed and transformed into a wish for a baby. Rather than accepting an innate

biological disposition of masculinity and femininity, Freud posited a theory of psychological bisexuality for both sexes in which one sex attains a preponderance of femininity and the other of masculinity as a result of societal demands: "...man and woman are made in culture" (Mitchell, 1974, p. 131). The crucial concept of penis envy which is the basis of feminine development can be interpreted, in part, as the psychical representation of the recognition of power in a patriarchal society by the girl. While the portrait he painted of women and 'normal' feminine development is far from flattering, it is invaluable as an analysis of the female predicament within a patriarchal society:

> His theories give us the beginnings of an explanation of the inferiorized and 'alternative' (second sex) psychology of women under patriarchy. Their concern is with how the human animal with a bisexual psychological disposition becomes the sexed social creature - the man or the woman.
>
> (ibid., p. 402)

Karen Horney (1885-1952)

Karen Horney was one of a number of practising psychoanalysts who began to focus on and stress the role of social factors in personality development and neurosis. This emphasis is apparent in her response to the Freudian view of the psychology of women. Her intention was to show that women were not inferior to men in any factual sense but rather, were subject to masculine civilization which made them appear inferior. Using a

psychoanalytic framework, she incorporated sociological and anthropological evidence in an attempt to relate the psychic responses of women to their actual social subordination in culture.

Horney's work was influenced, in part, by the philosophic writings of George Simmel whose work concentrated on the theme that all of civilization was a masculine one: "The State, the laws, morality, religion, and the sciences are the creation of men." In Horney's view, theories of the psychology of women were no exception. They too had been considered, measured and analyzed from this masculine standard and perspective. Pointing out the parallels between a little boy's ideas about little girls, and psychologists' ideas about women (1926), she argued that these theories were largely the product of male fantasies and that it would be "fruitful to look at long-familiar facts from a fresh point of view".

Horney focused much of her attention on the crucial concept of penis envy. Karl Abraham, in a paper entitled "Manifestations of the Castration Complex in Women" (1921), had noted that all women want to be men at some point in their lives and believed that the psychological explanation for this observation could be traced back to the girl's discovery that she has no penis and consequently desires one. Responding to Abraham, Horney questioned the assumption that women believe their genitals to be inferior and that "one half of the human

race is discontented with the sex assigned to it and can overcome this discontent only in favourable circumstances..." (1924, p. 38). She attempted to illustrate that if women do feel themselves at a disadvantage, there are real circumstances which account for the dissatisfaction. In her view, little girls want to urinate like a man, and they wish to for three reasons. The first is a result of a narcissistic over-estimation of the urination process in children in which the jet of urine suggests power and omnipotence. The second relates to the ability of the urinating boy to both display his penis to others and look at it himself all of which help to satisfy his sexual curiosity as far as his own body is concerned. The third is that the ability to hold his genital while urinating can be construed as permission to masturbate. In Horney's opinion, these factors favour little boys and place little girls at a real disadvantage:

> ...I would put the matter even more accurately if I said that as an actual fact, from the point of view of a child at this stage of development, little girls are at a disadvantage compared with boys in this respect of certain possibilities of gratification. For unless we are quite clear about the reality of this disadvantage we shall not understand that penis envy is an almost inevitable phenomenon in the life of female children, and one that cannot but complicate female development.
>
> (p. 42)

In other words, the basis of penis envy is due to the anatomical structure of the female genitals which, when compounded by social reality, place girls at an actual disadvantage.

In later essays, Horney argued that the equivalent of penis envy in women could be found in men. She offered the notion of womb envy; that is, the envy of motherhood in the little boy (Horney, 1926, 1930, 1932). Based on evidence derived from her own analysis, she reported that "one receives a most surprising impression of the intensity of this envy of pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, as well as of the breasts and of the act of suckling" (1926, pp. 60-61). This envy in men accounts for their strong impulse for creative work which acts as a compensation for their "relatively small part in the creation of living beings". Thus, the masculine need to achieve could be described as over-compensation for man's inability to bear children. Horney suggests that envy of pregnancy and motherhood also accounts for the male need to depreciate women and stress their inferiority, and since there is no evidence that such a view is justified in reality, she concludes that "this unconscious impulse to depreciation is a very powerful one".

At one stage in her writings, Horney suggests that penis envy may be the first expression of the mutual attraction of the sexes and this attraction, in her view, is based on a biological principle of nature. Throughout her essays, Horney makes reference, either implicitly or explicitly, to woman's 'true nature', and it becomes evident that she considered this 'true nature' as rooted in biology. For example, when discussing the "flight from womanhood" in some women who emulate the male role, she states:

> It is true that this attempt to deviate from her own line to that of the male inevitably brings about a sense of inferiority, for the girl begins to measure herself by pretensions and values that are foreign to her specific biological nature and confronted with which she cannot but feel herself inadequate.
>
> (1926, p. 67, my italics)

In a later essay entitled "The Dread of Woman" (1932), she argues that:

> ...the anxiety connected with his self-respect leaves more or less distinct traces in every man and gives his general attitude toward women a particular stamp that either does not exist in women's attitude to men, or if it does, is acquired secondarily. In other words, it is no integral part of their feminine nature.
>
> (p. 143, my italics)

In this same essay she suggests that a girl's desire to receive, "to take into herself", is based on her biological nature. In another instance she states: "Everything is measured against the masculine - that is, by a yardstick intrinsically alien to her..." (1926-27, p. 75, my italics). This biological emphasis is found throughout her writings.

Like Freud, Horney considered the outgrowth of normal feminine development to be the desire for a husband and a baby. However, she changed the terminology from 'normal' to 'favorable' (1926-27), and equated evidence of lack of a desire for motherhood with pathology. While she acknowledged that motherhood may be a handicap from a social standpoint, her writings reflected the strong positive value she placed on it:

> ...I, as a woman, ask in amazement, and what about motherhood? And the blissful consciousness of bearing a new life within oneself? And the ineffable happiness of the increasing expectation of the appearance of this new being? And the joy when it finally makes its appearance and one holds it for the first time in one's arms? And the deep pleasurable feeling of satisfaction in suckling it and the happiness of the whole period when the infant needs her care.
> (1926, p. 60)

Motherhood, then, is of the utmost importance in the fulfillment of the feminine.

Horney focuses much of her attention on sociological and anthropological evidence which relates to the psychology of the sexes. In an article entitled "The Distrust Between the Sexes" (1931), she includes cultural and historical data which indicate that males harbour a deep distrust of females and this lack of trust can be related back to feelings toward the mother. In an article on maternal conflicts (1933), she points to the differences in attitudes between American and European parents toward their children which impinges on the psychological interaction between parent and child. While discussing feminine masochism (1935), she argues for the need for sociological and anthropological data in order to determine the extent to which this trait is a result of cultural factors. These cultural concerns became increasingly more important in all her work but particularly to her theories related to neurosis and conflict. "The person who is likely to become neurotic is one who has experienced the culturally determined difficulties in an

accentuated form, mostly through the medium of childhood experience" (1937, p. 290).

Horney's theory of feminine psychology differs from that of Freud in a number of significant ways (Mitchell, 1974). Her assumption that the biological division of the sexes was directly reflected in their mental life points to an important theoretical difference. Freud argued that there was a significant gap between biological femaleness and maleness and psychological masculinity and femininity, whereas Horney did not acknowledge such a gap. In addition, her theory of sexual symmetry or equivalence was also an important departure from the Freudian position. In her view, each sex envies what the other has that they do not. Thus the girl envies the penis which represents power and instant sexual gratification and the boy envies the reproductive function which represents inherent creativity. A further distinction is of importance. Horney questions Freud's hypothesis that there is no fundamental difference between pathological and normal phenomena (1935). In her view, pathology is a transformation of health into sickness, and the difference is radical rather than normative.

Furthermore, while Freud maintains that penis envy is an experience through which <u>all</u> females pass, Horney, by continually stressing the fact that 'normal' women experience this envy for reasons that place them at a real disadvantage, facilitated a change in the concept from one of neutrality to one of moral

imputation. While this moral distinction has been conveyed through the subsequent decades, the theoretical disagreement has been largely forgotten.

It could be argued that Horney's most important contributions to the field of female psychology is her awareness of the importance of the social and cultural subordination of women, to which she made continual reference, and her recognition that models of feminine development were essentially male models. However, her attempt to rectify this bias is rendered pointless by her belief in an innate biological disposition to femininity which is only secondarily disturbed by society. While Freud maintains that man and woman are made in culture, Horney implies that man and woman are created in nature. Despite her sociological emphasis, her position, far more than Freud's, is one of biological determinism.

Summary

An examination of selected psychological theories from the 1890's until the 1930's indicates, that while there was substantial agreement as to those traits which typify femininity, there was far less agreement as to how such traits develop. Havelock Ellis argued for a passive sexual role based on biology and manifested in behaviour and attitudes. While he acknowledged that feminine 'tendencies' are reinforced by social

and cultural expectations, his theory was rooted largely in the belief that the laws of nature are supreme. Man and woman are complementary opposites, together forming one unity. Since they represent two aspects of the same essence, the view of male supremacy is an untenable one. In his opinion, humanity could not exist if there were not an equilibrium between the sexes. Tendencies associated with the feminine include receptivity, submissiveness and modesty. Women have a greater physical vulnerability than men which makes them more susceptible to minor oscillations. Affectability and suggestibility are the mental manifestations of this susceptibility. In addition, women show greater emotionality, are more tactful and practical, and have less tendency toward abnormalities, including genius and idiocy, than do men. Central to Ellis's ideas was the importance he placed on an open, scientific attitude in matters of human sexuality and the pains he took to find compensation for every characteristic which might be construed as one of weakness. His writings reflect a strong sense of justice and a rather naive cosmic optimism.

The theories of Sigmund Freud are far from optimistic, and make no such attempt at compensation. Traits associated with the feminine include passivity, masochism, vanity, jealousy, and a limited sense of justice. Women are generally viewed as weaker in their social interests and as having less capacity for sublimation of instincts. It is important to note that Freud

used the concepts, masculine and feminine, in the sense of activity and passivity rather than in a biological or sociological sense. He rejects a theory of symmetry between the sexes, arguing that both males and females initially strive for active masculinity but the female must massively repress this striving and revert to passive aims. Therefore, the preponderance of masculinity in one sex and femininity in the other is largely a result of cultural demands.

Karen Horney used a Freudian framework to posit a theory of equivalence between the sexes based on mutual envy. The girl envies the penis which represents power and immediate sexual gratification while the boy envies the womb which represents motherhood and inherent creativity. While Horney recognized that our civilization is a masculine one, and was sensitive to a male bias in models of femininity, she, like Ellis, believed that the feminine is only secondarily affected by society. Her writings present the view of an innate biological disposition which includes the desire for motherhood as an important component. The basic predisposition of women is feminine rather than bisexual but their milieu will influence their social patterns and attitudes. Her use of anthropological and sociological data which point out some of the effects of social and cultural factors on women is an important contribution to the field.

All three theories reflect the importance of marriage and motherhood as necessary to 'normal' feminine development. For

Ellis, marriage should involve the mutual enjoyment of sexuality for its own sake and not simply for the purpose of procreation, although planned parenthood is an ultimate goal. For Freud, women turn to marriage in order to satisfy their need to be loved and their desire for a baby. For Horney, marriage and motherhood are required in order to experience feminine fulfillment in a genuine and positive way.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to explore concepts of femininity from the 1890's to the 1930's in order to determine the extent to which existing cultural attitudes were reflected in the formulation of psychological theories. The period considered was one in which the question of women's rights was a major focus of attention and women were very much at the forefront of public consciousness. Works by male playwrights were selected as one social indicator since "the fact cannot be denied that the drama is a reflection of contemporary history..." (Barnes, 1968, p. 81). Writings by feminists were used in order to present the objections that existed with respect to prevailing attitudes about the feminine. The selection of playwrights, feminists and psychologists included in the paper was intended to be outstanding or representative rather than comprehensive.

As may be seen in Chapter II, concepts of femininity varied throughout history as the cultural conditions of an age changed. While the ascribed status of women might have been at variance with their actual status, the feminine itself was consistently devalued with respect to the masculine, regardless of its definition. This pattern continued to prevail from the 1890's to the 1930's. The character of Ellean in Pinero's The Second Mrs.

Tanqueray epitomized the traditional Victorian concept of a young lady. She is portrayed as saintlike and angelic, obedient and affectionate toward her father, sexually innocent, morally righteous and perfectly mannered. Her exclusive purpose in life is to marry an appropriate suitor and have children. Her role is one of passive service to a man, be it father or husband. In glaring contrast is Ellean's stepmother Paula, who represents all that is evil in women. She is wilful, disobedient and defiant of convention. As a woman with a 'past'; that is, one who both enjoyed her sexuality and made her living by it, she is morally reprehensible and ultimately unsavable. Constance, in Maugham's The Constant Wife represents the 'New Woman' who emerged in the 1920's. She is witty, worldly-wise, and far more independent both in her thinking and her actions than her Victorian counterpart. Nonetheless, she is first and foremost, a wife and mother. Despite the tolerance of a more open sexuality which included divorce as a viable option for those who could afford it, by the 1930's women continued to be portrayed primarily in terms of their biological function and their relationship to the family.

Feminists were not to see their vision of political, economic, and social equality realized. Although radical feminists had understood that significant change could only occur with a complete breakdown of the traditional family structure, this analysis was lost in the fight for the franchise, and there is some justification to the notion that women received the vote

primarily as a reward for their contribution to the war effort. In any event, the faith that suffragists had placed in the power of the vote proved to be unwarranted with respect to social change. Women failed to form a bloc and use it to their advantage in the committed and cooperative manner that the leaders of the movement had envisioned. Shaw's comment that women would prove as idiotic as men in their use of the franchise became a reality, and elected officials and politicians, with no threat of an effective lobby, were unconcerned with their interests as a group. Anticipated changes in the economic sphere did not materialize. "Aspiring career women were still limited to positions traditionally set aside for females; the overwhelming majority of working women continued to toil at menial occupations for inadequate pay; and the drive to abolish economic discrimination enlisted little support" (Chafe, 1972, p. 51). Although an increase in sexual freedom took place (facilitated by the development of simple and safe birth control methods), women were expected to practice their sexuality within the context of their own special sphere, relating once again to marriage and children. By the 1930's, the battle for equal education had resulted in a new and separate curriculum for women designed to make them more efficient and attractive housewives and mothers. It is not surprising that many of the feminists ultimately succumbed to the pressures of the feminine mystique.

Clearly, psychological theories of the feminine did not

exist in splendid isolation from their cultural context. Just as a proliferation of plays about women were written while their fight for equality was at the forefront of public consciousness, so too, a proliferation of psychological theories developed intended to explain their nature. Contributors included Alfred Adler, Wilhelm Reich, Helene Deutch, Otto Rank, Marie Bonaparte, Clara Thompson, and others, as well as Ellis, Freud, and Horney. A dominant theme of the playwrights and psychologists was woman's sexuality and her role as wife and mother. (Interestingly, Ellis, Freud, and Horney each investigated the apparent frigidity in women in order to determine whether it was constitutionally based or culturally induced.) The major thrust of these theories supported the contention that woman's most fulfilling role was that of wife and mother. To Ellis, the laws of nature dictated that women were the polar opposite of men. Since he equated masculinity and femininity with the male and female of the species, women, while deserving of equal consideration, are defined in terms of passivity, nurturance, receptivity, submissiveness and modesty. Their biological, and hence psychological destiny, requires that they be wives and mothers in order to attain fulfillment. To Freud, men and women are made in culture. The woman is the loser since she, as well as man, originally strives for active or masculine goals but is forced to repress them massively. Made to feel originally deprived without a penis, her envy leads her through a series of complicated psychological

mazes which, in 'normal' development, results in the need to be loved and the wish for a baby. While Horney offered the concept of womb envy as the male counterpart of penis envy, her theory of equivalence masks the importance of Freud's findings as an analysis of patriarchal culture and its influence on women. She, like Ellis, implied an innate biological disposition in which motherhood is a major component for fulfillment. The explicit or implicit assumption underlying these theories is that a woman's task is reproduction within the boundary of the 'natural' or nuclear family. While man produces culture, woman reproduces mankind. She remains defined on the basis of kinship patterns. Either descriptively, as in the case of Freud, or prescriptively, as in the case of Ellis and the post-Freudians, women were given the message that their proper place was in the home having babies.

Once the impact of the women's movement had waned, so did the interest in psychological theories of the feminine. The mid-nineteen thirties saw the crystallization of opposing psychoanalytic positions and the post-Freudians and popularizers alike, effectively silenced theoretical debate by interpreting Freud's descriptions as prescriptions. It is worth noting, however, that many of the contributors were women and it is to the credit of Freud, in particular, and psychoanalysis, in general, that its doors were open equally to both sexes, which was not the case in other areas of science. For the first time, women could enter into scientific enquiry about the nature of their own sex

and be recognized as legitimate authorities in the field. An interesting observation is that, of all the psychoanalysts who posited a normative morality, two women, Helene Deutch and Marie Bonaparte, were the most adamant in their position. This would appear to support the contention that oppressed groups tend to adopt the consciousness of their oppressors with a fervor. A woman who succeeds in a traditionally male sphere is particularly vulnerable and identification with the values and ideals of her male colleagues would undoubtedly lessen her sense of vulnerability substantially.

Thus it is clear that from 1890 to 1930, the concept of the feminine continued to be defined primarily in terms of women's biological function which served to reinforce her value within the context of the nuclear family structure. Political and economic equality did not come to pass as Shaw and the feminists had hoped. The definition of the feminine remained a patriarchal definition with the playwrights reflecting it, the feminists eventually succumbing to it and the psychologists reinforcing it by providing it with scientific credibility.

In light of the findings of this thesis, the current feminist charge that Freud's theories should not be taken seriously because he was a product of his time becomes feeble. Scientists, like anyone else, are products of their time. The theories of Ellis and Horney are more palatable to the existing social climate and hence tolerated because they contain an

obvious desire to be fair and sympathetic toward women. However, this does not make them either more accurate or less susceptible to cultural influences, despite their good intentions, than those of Freud, which are unflattering to women. In fact, in this instance, I would argue the opposite. Freud's theoretical formulations, by avoiding the concept of inevitable biological dualism, transcend their time more effectively in that they continue to provide an analysis of femininity under patriarchy that the others cannot. Nonetheless, all scientific theories are posited by people who are part of a human culture. A theory must be judged on its own merits despite the fact that the cultural conditions may have determined, in large part, the questions to be asked.

The awareness that the knowledge of the social sciences cannot exist in isolation from its culture leads to some important observations. The first deals with methodology, as pointed out in the introductory chapter. The assumption that a proper scientific attitude represents a completely detached frame of mind is pointless since it is clearly impossible when dealing with human affairs. Furthermore, it is undesirable. In our attempt to remain objective we often render meaningless the very subject we wish to understand. To repeat Polanyi, "the contribution of the person knowing what is being known is a vital component in the knowing act" and this seems particularly relevant for the social sciences. Accepting the impossibility

of a detached social science however, the task becomes one of determining its dangers. Prior to contemporary science, the authority of knowledge with regard to the feminine was largely vested in institutionalized religious belief structures. Priests as the formulators and interpreters of those belief systems, were in a position to perpetuate the subordination of women through the doctrines of the church. The decline of religious influence has resulted, to some extent, in a re-definition of deity which places contemporary authority to knowledge in the hands of science. In many ways, social scientists have become the contemporary equivalent of priests since it is their function to both formulate and interpret the doctrines of the social sciences to the public at large. And, like the priests of the past, they are valued and influential members of their society which encourages a vested interest on their part in its maintenance. When the existing social order was threatened in the past, priests were in a position to burn 'heretics' at the stake in order to maintain social control. Today, social scientists develop theories. This does not mean that they intentionally set out to find ways in which to keep de facto minorities subdued. Indeed this effect may be largely unconscious. But as social scientists, we should be alert to this possibility in any theory which focuses on groups such as women, children, racial minorities, political dissidents, etc.; in short, any group which exists outside the dominant power

structure and whose liberation would be seen to undermine its stability. This can be done only by a continuous analysis of the unconscious motivations which may be guiding our observations and conclusions. As Mannheim (1936) states:

> Only as we succeed in bringing into the area of conscious and explicit observation the various points of departure and of approach to the facts which are current in scientific as well as popular discussion, can we hope, in the course of time, to control the unconscious motivations and presuppositions which, in the last analysis, have brought these modes of thought into existence. A new type of objectivity in the social sciences is attainable not through the exclusion of evaluations but through the critical awareness and control of them.
>
> (p. 5)

Not only are the formulators of theory inextricably bound to their culture; in the social sciences so too are the conceptions they posit. Femininity is a concept which is sociological and historical in nature; that is, it both changes and is changed by cultural conditions. It is also psychological in nature insofar as it affects and is affected by an individual's response to it. The prevailing model as seen from an historical perspective may or may not take into account biological components. Yet most psychological theories assume the concept to be one which is based on a potentially knowable <u>universal</u> model; that is, one which holds for all women at all times. This approach confuses femininity with biological femaleness and loses touch with historical reality. It also points to what is an assumption of social

science rather than a fact and that is the assumption that there exists a basic human nature; in this case, a feminine one. Within the broad biological limits and potentialities of the female of the human species, however, a panorama of characteristics seems possible.

Clearly, femininity can only be properly understood within its cultural context and it is to that context that the student of the human disciplines must turn for data. Although this may provide certain methodological problems, nonetheless, advantages do exist within such a framework. For example, a rich source of material can be found within the arts. Regardless of the specific medium used (theatre, literature, painting, music, film, etc.), a systematic study can disclose whatever prevailing patterns may exist at a given time in history. Once a pattern emerges, it is possible to turn to other social indicators for verification. Furthermore, "the choice of a particular problem as a subject for study and the specific approach to it... reveal the influences of the contemporary state of social, spiritual and technical development as well as personal bias" (Klein, 1971, p. 2). In other words both scholar and artist reflect the temper of their times. To consider the opinion of one without considering the opinion of the other may lead to less understanding than the consideration of both.

An advantage of an historical approach is that it provides an element of distance between scholar and subject matter. "Since

they live in restricted milieux, [people] do not and cannot be expected to know all the causes of their condition and the limits of their selfhood. Groups of [people] who have truly adequate views of themselves and of their own social positions are indeed rare" (Mills, 1959, p. 162). Yet many social scientists reject the use of history on the grounds that its technique is unscientific. As Barzun and Graff (1957) rather pointedly note, perhaps this is because they are too busy to read history and are unable, when they do, to recognize their own materials presented in a different manner.

While concepts of the feminine will attract the interest of artist and scholar whenever women as a group are particularly visible within a cultural context, public prominence is not a necessary condition for availability of data. Women have always been regarded by both with deep interest, despite the social and political climate. Virginia Woolf's astonishment at the reams of material on the topic of woman will undoubtedly continue to be echoed in the future. But as Woolf and others have observed, most of the materials considered authoritative and acceptable for analysis have been written by men. In any systematic study of the feminine including one which turns to existing social indicators such as the arts for its sources, the woman's experience must be included. The social sciences have been guilty long enough in disregarding the female experience in their attempt to understand the feminine, (and most other concepts that fall within their

domain). Without it, however, a comprehensive analysis of women and their relationship to society is impossible.

To arrive at a many-sided concept such as femininity requires that one consider the view of both female and male, artist and psychologist, social scientist and historian. Perhaps it is only fair to remind the reader, however, that the extent of our understanding will be limited by the abilities of the scholar both to study all these fields in depth and to draw from these fields the pertinent facts and necessary connections.

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